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Senior piano lecture recital

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Senior piano lecture recital

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SENIOR PIANO LECTURE RECITAL

By

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with Honors in the Department of Music and Dance

Approved at Ypsilanti, Michigan, on this date _____

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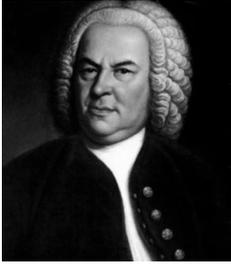
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PROGRAM NOTES



FRENCH SUITE NO. IV IN E FLAT MAJOR, BWV 815 J.S. BACH (1685-1750)

About the Composer: J.S. Bach was a Baroque composer and more widely known during his lifetime as a gifted organist. For most of his life he worked for the city of Leipzig, Germany as Kapellmeister of four different churches. His compositional output was tremendous – cantatas, organ pieces, harpsichord music, instrumental solo and chamber works, over a thousand works are attributed to him.

About the piece: The French Suites are so named for their resemblance to light-hearted French style. This suite was composed in 1722 and first published in 1733. The movements are based on the rhythm patterns of traditional dances. The Allemande is a serious and steady German dance. Courante means ‘running’ and is a steady stream of notes that flows over a bouncing bass line. The Sarabande has a colorful history as a fast dance from South America. The dance was outlawed in 1583 and what is now referred to as a Sarabande is a solemn, steady dance, very beautiful. The Gavotte is a lively French dance while the Minuet, another French dance meaning small and delicate, slows things down a bit. The Air in this suite provides a constant flow of sixteenth notes. The final piece, the Gigue, opens with a theme based on a horn call that recurs throughout the piece.

SONATA NO. 60 IN C MAJOR, HOB. XVI:50 FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN (1732-1809)



About the composer: Haydn began his music career as a choir boy. After his voice changed, he worked as a street musician in Vienna. He ended up working as the court composer for the Esterhazy estate. He composed in all the Classical genres, is referred to as the “father of the symphony” and had a successful and renowned career. Haydn was a true classical composer and his style speaks for the effect of the enlightenment on composers – clear melodies, prescribed form and simple harmonic accompaniment.

About the piece: This sonata is one of Haydn’s later works written around 1794. It employs traditional sonata form – Exposition, Development and Recapitulation – in both the first and second movements. This means that you will hear a theme, a second theme, a creative embellished rendition of the motives from those themes followed by a repetition of the first and second theme. The first movement only has one theme – it appears eleven times, never the

same twice. The second movement, an *Adagio*, is of a quiet and noble character – picture a tea party in England, gloves, hats, etc. The final movement is quick and bright: a refreshing close to the piece.



SCHERZO NO. 1 IN B MINOR, OP. 20

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810-1849)

About the composer: Chopin was a Polish pianist, composer and teacher. His mother began teaching him piano lessons and his talent soon warranted lessons from a professional musician. His first teacher, Adalbert Zywny, was primarily a violinist so Chopin developed a unique technique of playing on his own. By his eighth year Chopin was already playing at salons in Warsaw. He began publishing music in 1825; however, it was not until 1829 that his first well known and still appreciated works began to appear. Around 1830 he tried living in Vienna, however, he was not well received and in September of 1831 he arrived in Paris which became his home for the rest of his life. He wrote this Scherzo in 1832 after he moved to Paris.

About the piece: Scherzo is the Italian word for joke. Prior to 1650 this term was applied to light-hearted vocal works, after this date it has been applied mainly to instrumental works. The movement is usually in $\frac{3}{4}$, in rounded binary form and its character ranges from light-hearted to sinister. In most Scherzos there is a contrasting Trio section after which the Scherzo is repeated.

In this piece, Chopin follows the basic pattern of the Scherzo. The Scherzo is in ternary form overall with a contrasting Trio. The first part of the scherzo includes three basic ideas and the trio includes two. This piece is in $\frac{6}{8}$ time which is related to $\frac{3}{4}$, however, the piece is far from a joke. The tempo marking is *Presto con fuoco* meaning fast with fire. The character tends toward the tempestuous and is contrasted with the peaceful Trio in the middle.

CHINA GATES, JOHN ADAMS (B.1947)

About the composer: John Adams is an American composer who has written all sorts of works and is known for his minimalist operas. He was born and raised in New England and began composing at the age of ten. He earned two degrees from Harvard and since 1971 has resided in the San Francisco Bay area. After 9/11 he composed *On the Transmigration of Souls* for the New York Philharmonic and this work received the Pulitzer Prize for Music among other distinctions. Adams considers *Phrygian Gates* and its companion piece *China Gates* as his 'opus one' since they are the first pieces he wrote in a new style. Adams was schooled in serialism but it was not until he composed these pieces that he felt he had found a new voice for himself.



About the piece: *China Gates* is a minimalist work written in 1977. Minimalism is a style that focuses on sameness- this kind of piece usually stays on one pitch group and/or rhythm

pattern which gradually changes like a slowly rotating kaleidoscope. I think listening to this particular piece (which actually includes much more variety than many minimalist pieces) is like watching a fish tank. Nothing much happens, but it is mesmerizing. (Adams says that the piece strikes him as, "a piece calling for real attention to details of dark, light and the shadows that exist between.")

The term gate is borrowed from the vocabulary of electronics and refers to the sudden changes of mode in the piece (mode meaning the group of notes used). The pattern of gates begins with long sections in each mode. The changes speed up in the middle and slow down again toward the end.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN: RAGS FOR PIANO



WILLIAM BOLCOM (B.1938)

About the composer: National Medal of Arts, Pulitzer Prize and Grammy Award-winning composer William Bolcom studied composition with Milhaud and Messiaen among others. U of M composition faculty since 1973, Bolcom is a pianist, author and composer. His works includes the genres of chamber, operatic, vocal, choral, cabaret, ragtime and symphonic music.

About the piece: Ragtime music originated in the 1890's primarily as an African American style (*Maple Leaf Rag* composed in 1899 by Scott Joplin is an example). The complex and repetitious rhythms are thought to be derived from African folk music. Ragtime's golden day didn't last long, and was pretty much forgotten as jazz (itself influenced by ragtime) became more popular. In the late 1960's classical ragtime was revived in the music of composers such as Peter Winkler, William Albright and William Bolcom.

The *Garden of Eden Suite* tells the story of the fall in ragtime. Bolcom writes, "Old Adam, a "Chicken Scratch" recalling the animal dances of the 1900's, contains a reminiscence of Chris Smith's 'teens hit "Ballin' the Jack." *The Eternal Feminine* has a harmonically devious third strain that calls up the Mystery of Woman... ..the final rag in the suite, *Through Eden's Gates* conjures the image of Adam and Eve calmly cakewalking their way out of Paradise."

About the pianist: Lynnann Wieringa is finishing a Bachelor of Music degree in Piano Performance at Eastern Michigan University. Previously she completed a Diploma in Theology at the Faith Mission Bible College in Edinburgh, Scotland where she realized her true call to music studies. She is a recipient of the Jessie Dillman scholarship at EMU and a member of the Honors College. A piano student of Dr. Joel Schoenhals, she has also studied organ, harpsichord and clavichord with Dr. Ruiter-Feenstra and Prof. Scott Elsholz. In addition to her keyboard studies Lynnann has been a member of the EMU



Collegium Musicum choir for five semesters. In the fall of 2008 she will begin studies for a Masters of Art in Music Theory Pedagogy at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York.

Lynnann wishes to thank all of her incredible friends, family and teachers for their encouragement and support throughout her life. She would be incapable of this day and all the above achievements without you. Extra hugs to everyone who has put up with her practicing for more than twenty years now, and especially to those wonderful people with whom she lives and depends on in so many ways - thank you.

Lecture Notes

Welcome audience/ announcements

- people are free to move around as they need to for comfort
- no photography during the performance
- sign the list for the meal afterwards during intermission
- there will be a short intermission after Haydn (this was not put in the program)

French Suite No. IV in E flat Major, BWV 815

J.S. Bach (1685-

1750)

- From a notebook written for his second wife, Anna Magdalena, which he started writing in 1722
- Allemande is related to the French word for German. A court dance developed from a German folk dance.
- Courante is Italian for 'running'. The dance is marked by quick running steps.
- The Sarabande has a colorful history as an extremely fast and inappropriate dance that was outlawed. By Bach's time it was a slow dance in three with the accent on the second beat. It was a stately court dance.

-Gavotte comes from the French word for a group of Alpine dwellers. It was a French folk dance marked by raising the feet rather than sliding them.

-Minuet is from the French word for 'tiny'. It is a slow, graceful dance in $\frac{3}{4}$ which includes forward balancing, bowing and toe pointing.

-Air: this word is old English and refers to a vocal song usually.

-Gigue is the French word for the English 'jig'. It is a springy dance in triple meter and in a dance suite like this, giges are composed in a fugal style.

-The time signatures and styles of the dances were Bach's framework for composing the pieces. They were meant to be enjoyed as keyboard pieces, not for actual dance music.

Sonata No. 60 in C major, Hob. XVI:50

Franz Joseph Haydn

(1732-1809)

-Written for Therese Janzen in the 1790's.¹

-Uses sonata form (Exposition, Development and Recapitulation) in the first two movements.

-First movement has one theme which returns eleven times (never the same) (*Demonstrate theme at piano*)

-Haydn uses the theme as the basis for all the material in the rest of the movement

¹ In the video of the recital I state that this sonata was written for publication in the 1780's. This is erroneous; I am unwittingly referencing a different Sonata in C. Thus I have corrected the lecture notes and program notes for this project.

-Second movement is also in sonata form, but very different in character – a slow, noble adagio.

-Last movement is a kind of Rondo where a theme keeps reappearing. It is a quick and bright close to the entire piece.

Scherzo No. 1 in B minor, Op. 20

Frédéric Chopin

(1810-1849)

-Scherzo is the Italian word for 'joke'. Before 1650 this word referred to a light hearted vocal work.

-By the late 1700's it was one movement of a suite or other multi-movement work which was of a light style and swift tempo (also usually in 2/4)

-In the late 1700's the scherzo became the name of a movement which replaced the minuet. It was in rounded binary form with a character ranging between light-hearted and sinister. It often included a contrasting trio section.

-Chopin writes stand alone Scherzos – good size romantic pieces and not sounding much like a joke. It is a three part piece with a contrasting trio section.

-Writers have described this piece as “somber” “ironic” and “reckless”.

You will hear a distinct difference between this dramatic and colorful romantic piece and the lighter works from the first half of the recital.

China Gates

John Adams

(b.1947)

- Brief history of style in the 20th century. After the harmonic language was arguably 'perfected' by composers such as Brahms and Beethoven, people began to search for new ways of musical expression. Especially after the trauma of the World wars people didn't feel 'normal' compositional styles were able to express the range of emotion that was necessary. (*Play example of atonality – just blips*)
- After all that, composers became discontent again and people like John Adams didn't see a future in serialism.
- Considers China Gates and Phrygian Gates (22 minutes) his opus one because in this experiment with minimalist style he found his own voice.
- Minimalism – sameness, music with evolves slowly over time
- Gates, from electronic vocabulary in the 70's
- like watching a fish tank. You know not much is going to happen, but it is mesmerizing.

The Garden of Eden: Four Rags for Piano

William Bolcom

(b.1938)

- Ragtime music – 1890's through 1920's
- African American music – marches and folk music influence (from bands)
- Jazz predominates and ragtime falls to the wayside
- 1960's classical ragtime revival (Albright, Bolcom)
- Old Adam, chicken scratch, animal dances
- Eternal Feminine, Mystery of Woman

-Through Eden's Gates, Adam and Eve cakewalking out of paradise

Before last piece

-thanks for coming, for encouragement

-announcement of plans (Eastman School of Music, MA Theory

Pedagogy)

-invitation to refreshments

Reflections on Preparing a Recital

Preparing a piano recital is a challenging and enjoyable experience that takes months of diligent practice and hard work in order for a successful performance. While preparing this recital I was continually aware of the technical challenges involved, the creative adventure on which I was embarking and especially the amount of emotional energy that is required of the performer. This

reflection focuses on those points in individual pieces and my experience of preparing them for public performance.

Preparing a recital is a technical challenge. There are pieces on my program that a year ago I did not have the facility to play. This of course is the point of a recital – to expand the performer’s repertoire and also their ability and technical skills. The Scherzo is one example of my technical challenge. Learning the piece included discovering a technique to accommodate the challenges of swift arpeggios and leaps in the music. This was a subject in several lessons and over a number of weeks I was able to work out my hand and finger position so that I could perform with ease. I would work on this piece for a few days building new muscle memory paths. My left hand especially would become sore and I would have to take a break from the piece before going back at it.

Old Adam was completely unplayable to me, and I decided to go at it pretty systematically first learning the rhythm with my hands tapping a table until I could perform the piece (note-less) from memory. While this was being accomplished I turned the metronome on half the finished speed and began working on all the leaps at the keyboard. I found leaps very scary at this point in my development. Eventually the piece started to come together. The first public performance was for my summer peer class (a group of dedicated students who stuck around for the summer and met every other week for performance and discussion). I received lots of feedback on loosening up for the style (it’s like jazz after all!) and playing with more rhythmic freedom. I have to say though,

considering that I struggle with the concept of rhythm, I was proud that the class thought my performance was too 'straight'. The second performance was for Holy Humor Sunday at my church. I am not sure if a sacrilegious ragtime piece was appropriate for worship, but in the lightness of the mood (with the worship team in clown suits and all) it went well and seemed okay. Looking back the performance was a shadow of what I can do now, but the point is that the pieces were pushed out to a sympathetic public ear early, and the overall development of the piece was helped by this.

Preparing a recital is a creative adventure. I think my favorite piece on the recital is the French Suite. Performing Bach's pieces gives me a real connection to the history of my beloved keyboard instruments having studied a bit on harpsichord and clavichord. I probably spent the most time on the details of those pieces. Although I may be out of line, I hold the theory that one can always fudge an arpeggio, but you can't fake counterpoint. Bach has to be known so well you can play it in your sleep - it may only be two voices most of the time, but it is highly complex.

As I prepared the French Suite, I was very aware of my training in early music technique. I considered early fingerings, making alterations for the modern instrument. I also experimented with some ornamentation, especially in the *Allemande* and *Sarabande*. It has become common practice to ornament repeats in Bach and these ornaments are added at the creative intuition of the performer, and kept within certain stylistic boundaries. At first, I couldn't see where to add anything in a steady stream of eighth notes. It took a while to hear

openings for ornamentation. I listened to several recordings on both the piano and harpsichord, marking in ornamentation from others' interpretations and borrowing shamelessly the ornaments I liked and could make work.

Another area of creativity comes in shaping phrases and working on dynamic levels. Many of my lessons are focused on this aspect. Haydn received a lot of this type of practice - it consisted of figuring out where phrases were headed to and deciding on specific crescendos and diminuendos. A lot of work is done on character as well. The opening motive in the Haydn can be played any number of ways. The decision was made to keep the character light and buoyant.

Preparing a recital is an emotional journey. It isn't enough to play the notes on the page correctly - one must offer for the audience an emotional experience to which they can relate. The performer lives with the music daily for months before the performance seeking to discover meaning behind the notes on the page. As meaning is found, technique and creative interpretation are manipulated to convey these messages from the keyboard.

One challenge I faced in my program was the diversity of styles represented. This diversity was not by accident and enriched my life academically as I searched for interpretive ideas and historical contexts in the library as well as at the keyboard. For Bach the main challenge was deciding on touch and ornaments. I am still not sure if I have enough variety in the character of the different dances, but an attempt was made to differentiate between them in touch (heavy and light) and mood.

Haydn was a real delight to play. One day one of my fellow students had to check the practice room to make sure we hadn't gotten a Fortepiano, which made me gloat just a little. I had worked very hard on my classical piano touch on a Mozart sonata my sophomore year, so I felt getting into the Haydn was very natural. The challenges were rhythmic and technical in this piece; the character and emotion were fun to work on. One interesting marking in the Haydn sonata are two locations in the first movement in which Haydn instructs the keyboardist to hold the pedal through an entire short passage. On a Steinway this could be a little self destructive, but with practice holding the pedal halfway and the aid of the *una corda* a delightful music box effect is produced.

For Chopin my greatest challenge was the confidence to tackle such a large and fiery piece. Although I really wanted to play this piece I don't generally care for the extremes of the romantic era, inwardly labeling them as 'showy' and 'over the top'. Learning the notes of this piece was not excessively difficult (excepting one passage that moves quickly and strangely in a descending modulatory pattern involving French sixths) but playing with confidence and energy for nine minutes a piece that utilized most of the keyboard - herein lie the challenge. The best practice technique was that of slow practice with all the phrasing and dynamics. I felt I could have done this twice as much as I did. It takes a lot of patience and mental energy to do this and was an invaluable exercise in the final performance of the piece - it gave me a sense of control. Actually, after the recital the Chopin has been the most complemented of all the works - people telling me that it was their favorite piece in the program and that I

played it with a strong sense of ownership - so obviously this practice technique was a success.

Learning *China Gates* was the most unique music experience.

Minimalism is new style to me, and I am learning to appreciate it. I ended up playing this work because I wrote a paper on modernism and postmodernism in music of the twentieth century for my graduate school applications. This piece served as my postmodern example. Learning the notes was not too challenging since the piece easily breaks up into a collection of hand positions. Really hearing it was a challenge. The piece moves from one mode to the other in an ambiguous sense of meter. Without any common practice harmonic techniques it builds in emotion as much as sound towards the middle point and then descends again in intensity. The piece took concentration and emotional commitment.

Finally, the ragtime music was hardest of all to practice. I always felt like I was just goofing off when I played it! It is truly creatively and seamlessly written and deserved as much attention as the 'classical' works. It was really fun trying to loosen up my normally uptight self to be able to play these pieces with freedom and enjoyment.

In my last lesson before my recital we discussed letting go and playing 'by faith'. People get into a practice mindset where they are micromanaging every movement. This is a necessary phase of learning, but not the goal in the performance. In the performance the performer lets go of the micromanaging and allows them self to trust their body to do everything it is trained to do and

focuses on producing the sound they are looking for. In my run through that day Dr. Schoenhals felt that I was still practicing - listening to the sound I produced rather than hearing what I wanted in advance. At the time I was completely overwhelmed by this suggestion and pictured myself relearning the program in the next five days. Of course, this wasn't the case. I am very fearful of letting go of the practicing mode before the performance - I kind of feel like that is what you do for the 'real' recital and too much 'just playing' would somehow harm your ability to play. This ridiculous notion dealt with, I tried to let go in my performing in the next few days before my recital and the result is that I really enjoyed the performance.

What I learned is that I should make it my goal to experience a sense of real freedom and enjoyment long before the actual performance date. It is not just a special feeling one gets from the adrenaline of the performance - this should be the experience of making music. In my junior recital I had one piece really prepared to this level of enjoyment and I resolved that my entire senior recital should feel like that. I was closer than last year, although I still have far to go. The important thing is that through the experience of preparing this recital I have been able to develop a greater understanding of how I can most expediently deal with all the aspects of preparing a recital and now possess a higher standard and clearer goals for myself as a pianist.

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