

Compact disc

M 3234

2015

3-2

School of Music

University of Washington Seattle, Washington

*Presents a Faculty Recital:*

Robin McCabe, *piano*  
*AROUND ROBIN*

*Joined by*

Nora Gunning

Pei-Jung Huang

Li-Cheng Hung

Yuhua Jiang

Lidia Kotlova

Andrew Romanick

Hyun Su Seo

Laure Struber

Nicholas Tagab

Lauren Tokunaga

Kay Yeh

Monica Yoon

March 2, 2015

7:30 PM

Meany Theater

PROGRAM

CD#17,141

MIROIRS (1905).....<sup>29.27</sup> MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)

- 1 Noctuelles
- 2 Oiseaux tristes
- 3 Une barque sur l'océan
- 4 Alborada del Gracioso
- 5 La vallée des cloches

INTERMISSION

6 remarks, McCabe

7 from DON GIOVANNI: OVERTURE.....<sup>6:21</sup> W. A. MOZART (1756-1791)  
arr. F. X. Chwatal

Piano I: { Pei-Jung Huang  
          { Nora Gunning

Piano II: { Lidia Kotlova  
           { Robin McCabe

8 ESPAÑA .....<sup>6:26</sup> EMANUEL CHABRIER (1842-1894)  
arr. Camille Chevillard

Piano I: { Li-Cheng Hung  
          { Nicholas Tagab

Piano II: { Robin McCabe  
           { Yuhua Jiang

9 FANTASY ON THEMES FROM CARMEN.....<sup>9:20</sup> GEORGES BIZET (1838-1875)  
arr. Mack Wilberg

Piano I: { Robin McCabe  
          { Monica Yoon

Piano II: { Laure Struber  
           { Lauren Tokunaga

10 THE STARS AND STRIPES FOREVER .....<sup>3:40</sup> JOHN PHILIP SOUSA (1854-1932)  
arr. Mack Wilberg

Piano I: { Andrew Romanick  
          { Hyun Su Seo

Piano II: { Kay Yeh  
           { Robin McCabe

## PROGAM NOTES

### PART I: *MIROIRS*

*The eye sees not itself  
But by reflection, by some other things*

*'Julius Caesar,' Shakespeare*

Ravel quoted this passage as to how we are to understand the ethos behind his *Miroirs*. The metaphor here is both apt and elegant: the eye understands, 'sees,' in reference to something else. As Paul Roberts puts it, 'we understand ourselves by what we see reflected back from the world around us.'

The magic of this music, for me, lies in the multiple layers of impressions that are part of a suggested image, either in a title, or perhaps a tag line of poetry. In *Noctuelles*, for example, we know that moths are silent insects. Yet, Ravel manages to evoke the sonic texture of motion: whirling, dithering sound, and dizzying, erratic flight! The moody delectation of *Miroirs* has always been irresistible to me, and performing the cycle is a privileged journey, matching the endless possibilities of sound with image.

### *Noctuelles* (Night Moths)

*An engine, worn out with black hollow coughing,  
stands silent. Everything stops and dreams as before. Old things yawn,  
recognize the hour, and go back to sleep. In the shed, the  
night moths take off in awkward flight and circle around their beams.*

*'The Little Station of Fleeting Shadows,' Leon-Paul Fargue*

Ravel dedicated *Noctuelles* to his life-long Apache poet friend, Fargue. And even though Fargue did not publish the poem until 1912, he wrote it seven years earlier, and Ravel certainly would have known it. The *Apaches* tried out all their work with each other. But the poem's title is irrelevant to capturing its meaning. The pianist must execute the piece with incredible lightness and agility, true *léger de main*. Cross-rhythms and unexpected accents abound, conveying turbulence and skittish agitation.

And then, as in the poem: *Everything stops, and dreams*. The performer must convey both the histrionic flight of the moths, as well as the languor of their sudden, absolute stillness.

### *Oiseaux tristes* (Sad Birds)

This was the first piece of the cycle that Ravel composed. At the end of his life he spoke of this work in terms of 'birds lost in the torpor of a dark forest during the hottest hours of summer.' The inspiration for the piece came from the forest of Fontainebleau, where Ravel was spending a weekend. He heard the song of a blackbird, an elegant and melancholic arabesque, and transcribed it without changing a single pitch. Birdsong is typically associated with ardor, with the promised bliss of approaching spring. Ravel's birds suggest wistfulness, perhaps memories of loss. Their oscillating calls are set against a typical Ravel convention, (also found in *Noctuelles*): a pulsating, grounded rhythmic motive that acts almost as a pendulum, in stark contrast to the undulant calls of the birds. This is, indeed, a mournful landscape. For me, it is one of the most poetic evocations of Ravel's entire output.

### *Une barque sur l'océan* (A Boat on the Ocean)

Ravel dedicated this seascape to the painter and amateur pianists Paul Sordes. It was in Sordes' house that the first meeting of the Apaches took place. The work exploits a wealth of arpeggiation, tremolandos and pedal effects. This is the one piece in the cycle for which Ravel suggests no metronome marking. Rather, he counsels the performer to make the music 'souple,' pliant and flexible. The fullest imagination of the interpreter is needed here, to convey the many moods of the sea: the motion and surge of waves and the booming and cascading of water against cliff and rock. If we see the piece as portraying a boat bobbing on the waves, we have missed the point. Ravel's melody, harmony and rhythm all serve to exploit the full resources of the piano. Here is a symphonic poem evoking the sea, at once expansive and menacing, sparkling and storm torn, ebbing in serene repose.

### *Alborada del Gracioso* (Morning Song of the Jester)

Here is a bold, audacious piece of musical virtuosity and blazing color—the rhythmic antics of the jester virtually leap off the page, and off the piano as well! The hues are vivid; the reds are of Matisse. There are no pastels in this musical canvas, and the humor and vivacious character of the jester should be projected in musical technicolor, and with strict, rigorous adherence to the pulse.

*Gracioso* is a literary reference with a precise connotation, dating from Spanish comedy of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, its Golden Age. The play-

wright Lope de Vega created a hugely popular genre of three-act dramas that fused tragedy with comedy, the serious with the entertaining. The *gracioso* is an amoral and asocial free spirit, part clown, and part subversive servant, who takes a leading thematic role in these plays. de Vega described his own creative aims in his treatise on theater from 1609, *The New Art of Writing Plays*. The *gracioso*, he says, is the chief instrument by which the playwright could 'hold up a mirror to nature.' Now perhaps the character's association with mirrors gives us the clue to this exotic piece's place within *Miroirs*. This is not a landscape, a seascape, or a portrait of nature. Some scholars even see it as depicting the composer's wry self-portrait.

The middle section of *Alborada* is an amazing departure from what has preceded it, and from what follows. Here we have *cante hondo*, the 'deep song' of flamenco, the wailing of the *copla*. The phrases are spoken, almost guttural, in free recitative style, expressing lament, loss, and perhaps cavernous inner grief. The singer is accompanied by throbs from the guitar, punctuating the vocalizations. This is astoundingly imaginative writing for the piano, and the interlude must be given caring attention by the performer, before the final acrobatics of the jester return.

### *La vallée des cloches* (The Valley of the Bells)

This evocation is imbued with bell sounds – cow bells, church bells, bells heard across valleys, bells of everyday Basque folk life – all depicted through the mingling of oscillating, open intervals and pedal points. The atmosphere of this piece is deeply intimate. Ravel appears to have suggested that the lowest sounding bell, heard at the end of the piece, might be that of the Sacré-Coeur cathedral in Paris. The effect of displaced sound, across all registers of the piano, is almost trance-inducing. There is even an intrusive 'insurgent' bell, as the scholar Stephen Zank deems it. This bell tolls on an E<sup>#</sup> pitch which is foreign to all others. The effective is mildly corrosive, but intriguingly so. The middle section of the piece is rich and sumptuous, with a melodic phrase that Paul Roberts labels 'unbuttoned.' The sensuous tune here is ardent and truly 'heart on the sleeve,' a paradoxical departure from the beautiful but emotionally aloof clangor of the bell passages which surround it.

## PART II: Music For Two Pianos, Eight Hands

My students have brought a great deal of meaning to my life over the years. The entrusting of their talent, their willingness to work harder, to broaden their capacities and to seek a deeper meaning in the music they study -- all of this is inspiring in itself. Watching the growth of their musicality and humanity brings me lasting pleasure. And in guiding, suggesting and advising them, I find continual discoveries and new realizations which enliven and enrich my own research, practice and performance.

With this in mind, it has been a joyful excursion to prepare these transcriptions with my students. In celebrating them and their talent, we present this festive music for two pianos, eight hands!

Program Notes © Robin McCabe, 2105

Celebrated American pianist ROBIN MCCABE has established herself as one of America's most communicative and persuasive artists. McCabe's involvement and musical sensibilities have delighted audiences across the United States, Europe, Canada, and in seven concert tours of the Far East. The United States Department of State sponsored her two South American tours, which were triumphs artistically and diplomatically.

As noted by the New York Times, "What Ms. McCabe has that raises her playing to such a special level is a strong lyric instinct and confidence in its ability to reach and touch the listener." The Tokyo Press declared her a "pianistic powerhouse," and a reviewer in Prague declared, "Her musicianship is a magnet for the listener." Richard Dyer, eminent critic of the Boston Globe, wrote: "Her brilliant, natural piano playing shows as much independence of mind as of fingers."

Her recordings have received universal acclaim. Her debut album for Vanguard Records featured the premiere recording of Guido Agosti's transcription of Stravinsky's *Firebird Suite*. Critics praised it as "mightily impressive." Stereo Review described her disc of Bartók as "all that we have come to expect from this artist, a first-rate performance!" She was commissioned to record four albums for the award-winning company Grammofon AB BIS in Stockholm, which remain distributed internationally, including the CD "Robin McCabe Plays Liszt" (AB BIS No. 185).

McCabe, a Puyallup native, earned her bachelor of music degree *summa cum laude* at the University of Washington School of Music, where she studied with Béla Siki, and her master's and doctorate degrees at The Juilliard School of Music, where she studied with Rudolf Firkusny. She joined the Juilliard faculty in 1978 and then returned to the UW in 1987 to accept a position on the piano faculty. In 1994 McCabe was appointed Director of the School of Music, a position she held until 2009. She has held a Ruth Sutton Waters Professorship and a Donald Petersen Professorship in the School of Music. In addition, McCabe is a dedicated arts ambassador and advocate for arts audience development, frequently addressing arts organizations across the country. With colleague Craig Sheppard she has launched the highly successful *Seattle Piano Institute*, an intense summer "immersion experience" for gifted and aspiring classical pianists that enters its sixth season in July 2015.

The winner of numerous prizes and awards, including the International Concert Artists Guild Competition and a Rockefeller Foundation grant, McCabe was the subject of a lengthy New Yorker magazine profile, "Pianist's Progress," later expanded into a book of the same title.

In 1995 McCabe presented the annual faculty lecture – a concert with commentary – at the University of Washington. She is the first professor of music in the history of the University to be awarded this lectureship. Seattle magazine selected McCabe as one of 17 current and past University of Washington professors who have had an impact on life in the Pacific Northwest. In 2005, to celebrate its 100th year as an institution, The Juilliard School selected McCabe as one of 100 alumni from 20,000 currently living to be profiled in its centenary publication recognizing distinction and accomplishments in the international world of music, dance, and theater.

McCabe performs regularly throughout the United States, and in September of 2011 she made her first visit to South Korea. She appears often as an invited jurist for international piano competitions, most recently in New Orleans, San Antonio, and Vancouver, Canada. Next October, McCabe will be heard in recital and master classes in Beijing, China. In June of 2016 she will serve on the jury for the international Gina Bachauer Competition in Piano.

CLASSICAL

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KING FM 98.1

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

(Unless otherwise noted, performances are at 7:30 PM)

### Performance Location Key

BA – Brechemin Auditorium

BH – Benaroya Hall

ECC – Ethnic Cultural Center

HUB – Hub Lyceum

JPH – Jones Playhouse

MT – Meany Theater

MST – Meany Studio Theater

MU 213 – Rm. 213 Music Building

SJC – St. James Cathedral

SMC – St. Mark's Cathedral

WA – Walker-Ames Room,

Kane Hall

March 8, Guitar Master Class: Amadeus Duo. 10:00 AM, MU 213.

March 8, *Music from the War to End All Wars*. 4:30 PM (Ronald Moore Lecture at 4:00 PM), BA.

March 9, Studio Jazz Ensemble/Modern Band. MT.

March 10, Ethnomusicology Visiting Artist Concert: Srivani Jade, *Music of North India*. BA.

March 10, Wind Ensemble, Campus & Symphonic Band. MT.

March 11, Chamber Singers & University Chorale. MT.

March 12, Brechemin Piano Series. BA.

March 13, University Symphony w/Concerto Competition Winners. MT.

March 14, Barry Lieberman & Friends: Catalin Rotaru Master Class. 2:00 PM, BA.

March 15, Barry Lieberman & Friends: Catalin Rotaru Recital. 2:00 PM, BA.

April 2, Brechemin Scholarship Recipients Recital. BA.

April 3, Faculty concert: Marc Seales, *piano*. BA.

April 9, Brechemin Piano Series. BA.

April 9, Music of Today: DXARTS. MT.

April 13, Clarinet Night. BA.

April 17, Faculty Recital: Carole Terry, *organ*. 8:00 PM, SJC.

April 20, Wind Ensemble & Symphonic Band. MT.

April 24, University Symphony & Seattle Symphony. "*Side by Side*." MT.

April 25, Faculty Recital: Craig Sheppard, *piano*. MT.

April 26, Littlefield Organ Series: Iain Quinn. 3:00 PM, WA.

April 28, Guest Artist Recital: Wendy Yamashita, *piano*. BA

April 29, Guest Artist Masterclass: Wendy Yamashita, *piano*. 4:30 PM, BA.

May 1, IMPFest VII. ECC.

May 2, IMPFest VII. ECC.

May 3, Guitar Master Class: Marcin Dylla. 10:00 AM, MU 213.

May 3, *Music from the War to End All Wars*. 4:30 PM (Steven Morrison lecture at 4:00 PM), Brechemin Auditorium.

May 3, IMPFest VII. Time to be announced, ECC.

May 7, Brechemin Piano Series. BA.

May 8, UW Opera: Mozart, *The Magic Flute*. MT.

May 9, UW Opera: Mozart, *The Magic Flute*. MT.

May 10, UW Opera: Mozart, *The Magic Flute*. 2:00 PM, MT.