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M 3234

2018

1-11

Robin McCabe
and
Rachelle McCabe

DUO PIANOS

7:30 PM
January 11, 2018
Meany Theater

UW MUSIC
2017-18 SEASON

NONCIRC CD# 17,957

PROGRAM

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- 1 Variations on a Theme of Haydn, Opus 56B.....19:27..... Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
- 2 Symphonic Dances from "West Side Story"21:47..... Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)
transcribed by John Musto (b. 1954)

INTERMISSION

- 3 Nocturne, "Fêtes".....6:27..... Claude Debussy (1862-1918)
transcribed by Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
- 4 Two Andalusian Dances.....11:18..... Manuel Infante (1833-1958)
Sentimiento
El Vito
- 5 Fantasy on themes from "The Wizard of Oz"8:10..... William Hirtz (b. 1955)
based on themes by Harold Arlen and Herbert Stotham

PROGRAM NOTES

Our program this evening marks two centennial milestones in the realm of music: 100 years ago, in 1918, Leonard Bernstein entered this world as Claude Debussy took leave of it. Both composers are honored tonight, through symphonic masterpieces transcribed for the keyboard.

JOHANNES BRAHMS: VARIATIONS ON A THEME OF HAYDN, "(Saint Anthony's Chorale,") Opus 56 B

It is not hard to compose, but what is fabulously hard is to leave the superfluous notes under the table.

—Johannes Brahms

Theme and Variation form first appears in Brahms's output in the second movement of his Opus One piano sonata. From then on, he composed seven variation sets and nine variation movements across a period of forty years. He became a consummate master of this structure, finding ingenious freedoms while still preserving the pervading unity.

This set of variations is Brahms's final tribute to Haydn, whose music had so strongly influenced his own artistic development. This homage was first expressed some fifteen years before the Haydn Variations, in the "Serenades" of Opus 11 and Opus 16. Brahms came to know the "St. Anthony Chorale" three years before he completed the work: it was a theme in a wind partita discovered by the Haydn scholar C. F. Pohl, though now Haydn's authorship is disputed and the more general view is that the melody is by Pleyel or is an anonymous pilgrim's chant. In any case, its simplicity and solemn forthrightness proved fertile ground for Brahms, and we today who perform and hear this music are the beneficiaries of that inspiration. Brahms's own arrangement of the work for orchestra is particularly rich in the scoring for winds and brass.

As Brahms developed and matured, the influence of Beethoven became more pronounced in his variation craft. Melodic treatment in itself is no longer the foundation for a variation. Rather, it is a fragment, a phrase or a rhythmic configuration which is taken out of context and molded and developed, first into a motive, then into entire the variation itself. The result is a wide variety of structure within the eight variations you shall hear. Whether it be through double-counterpoint, 'mirrored voice' writing or a lilting *Sicilienne*, each variation projects artful uses of the original theme in its melodic contour and in the pervasive descending tetra-chord, the notes E^b - D - C - B^b. The final *passacaglia* is a magisterial conclusion, a joyous conversation of double-counterpoint between the two pianos.

LEONARD BERNSTEIN: SYMPHONIC DANCES FROM "WEST SIDE STORY," transcribed by John Musto

Music can name the unnameable and communicate the unknowable

–Leonard Bernstein

"*West Side Story*" hit Broadway like a bombshell in September of 1957. It would be hailed as a landmark in American theater. The lyrics were by a newcomer named Stephen Sondheim. Here is a modern-day, gritty big-city adaptation of the story of Romeo and Juliet in which Tony, a former gang leader on the verge of adulthood, and Maria, a girl newly arrived from Puerto Rico, are the star-crossed lovers. The rival street gangs – the Jets and the Sharks – stand in for the Montagues and the Capulets.

It would require the spilling of a great deal of ink to try to summarize the many unique musical elements which make this work so compelling. One must be mentioned here, the use of leitmotifs as a dramatic device: the tritone - relationship between C-G-F[#] is transformed and twisted in all sorts of ways: it forms the name of Maria in the famous love tune, and it is the gesture that propels the "Rumble" scene. As Bernstein's own notes reveal, it is hidden within the music, in numerous places!

For those who are interested in knowing what transpires on stage during the course of the dances, the following summary outlines the principal sections of the music:

Prologue (Allegro moderato): The growing rivalry between the two gangs.

Somewhere (Adagio): In a dream ballet, the two gangs are united in friendship.

Scherzo (Vivace and leggiero): In the same dream, the gangs break away from city walls, finding themselves in a playful world of space, air and sun.

Mambo (Meno presto): In the real world again, the competitive dance at the gym between the gangs.

Cha-cha (Andantino con grazia): Tony and Maria see each other for the first time; they dance together.

Meeting Scene (Meno mosso): Music accompanies their first words spoken to one another.

Cool Fugue (Allegretto): An elaborate dance in which Riff leads the Jets in harnessing their hostility, figuratively "cooling their jets."

Rumble (Molto allegro): Climactic gang battle: the two gang leaders, Riff and Bernardo, are killed.

Finale (Adagio): Maria's "*I have a Love*" develops as a solemn procession which recalls the vision of "*Somewhere*," evoking a world without prejudice and hate.

CLAUDE DEBUSSY: NOCTURNE: "FETES" ("FESTIVALS"), transcribed by Maurice Ravel

Music begins where words are powerless to express. I want music to seem to rise from the shadows and indeed sometimes to return to them.

–Claude Debussy

The three orchestral Nocturnes of Debussy were inspired by a set of paintings from the 1870s by the American artist James Whistler. These artworks, also entitled "*Nocturnes*," are studies in light and shade that offer an impression of landscape and object. In fact, Debussy knew Whistler and several other artists – Toulouse Lautrec and Gauguin, for example. And he was a great admirer of the works of J. M. W. Turner, whose canvases show a hyper-sensitivity to light, similar to that found in Whistler's paintings.

Debussy gives us a clue as to his conception of the works: "The title *Nocturne* is to be interpreted here in a general and more particularly, a decorative sense." Debussy had by now developed a deep-seated resistance to the gesture of musical rhetoric – above all to the boisterous post-Wagnerian variety then flourishing in Austro-German late Romanticism. "The muse," he liked to say, "should always be discreet."

The Debussy style prefers quiet sounds to loud ones, and, very often, a sense of stillness rather than traditional symphonic, goal-directed motion. The swirling rhythms and angular contours of "*Fetes*" combine opposites: the music's brilliance is at once ultra-vivid and strangely abstracted, so that the central section's sudden switch of pace and material suggests an imaginary passing procession – "a dazzling fantastic vision," as Debussy described it – rather than a real one.

MANUEL INFANTE: ANDALUSIAN DANCES, "Sentimiento" and "El Vito"

Infante was a popular Spanish composer, active in the early 20th century. His music is infused with folk idioms and splashes of vibrant color and rhythm. The pianist Jose Iturbi was a great exponent of his music, and the Dance "*El Vito*" is dedicated to him. The title refers back to the 16th century and to the Christian saint and martyr, St. Vitus. The dance is in a lively 3/8 rhythm, a joyful and energetic evocation.

WILLIAM HIRTZ: FANTASY ON THEMES FROM "THE WIZARD OF OZ"

Bill Hirtz transcribes several of Harold Arlen's iconic themes from the soundtrack of "*The Wizard of Oz*" in this fanciful piano duet. Our listeners may well have heard the pianist Jon Kimura Parker perform Hirtz's arrangement for one piano, created especially for Parker. This duet is the first incarnation of the work, and it is a clever "capture," so to speak, of the hopeful, uplifting spirit of the classic film.

PERFORMER BIOGRAPHIES

RACHELLE MCCABE, concert pianist and professor of music at Oregon State University, enjoys an international career as artist-teacher and is well known to audiences throughout the Pacific Northwest where she appears frequently as a solo recitalist, concerto soloist, duo pianist, and highly respected chamber musician. Rachelle McCabe has performed throughout the United States, and in Canada, Southeast Asia, France, and England. She has been heard on NPR's *Performance Today*, the CBC, and PBS television. She is Director of Piano Studies at Oregon State University, Artistic Director of Corvallis-OSU Piano International and its prestigious Steinway Piano Series, and Executive Director of an intensive summer program for chamber music studies, the OSU Chamber Music Workshop.

A dedicated teacher, Rachelle McCabe directs piano institutes for advanced musicians at Oregon State and has also taught at the Seattle Piano Institute, the Victoria International Music Festival, and the La Salle School of the Arts in Singapore. She adjudicates competitions and festivals throughout the Pacific Northwest and has twice adjudicated festivals in Hong Kong.

An advocate for conservation awareness, Rachelle performs innovative programs addressing climate change and global extinction with writer/philosopher Kathleen Dean Moore. The duo has performed across the United States and Canada. In 2016, their program, *A Call to Life in a Time of Extinction*, which features McCabe's performance of Rachmaninoff's Variations on a Theme of Corelli, was a keynote event at the world congress of the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature). McCabe and Moore will perform at national and international conferences in 2018 and 2019 including the Climate Change and Consciousness Conference at the Findhorn Foundation in North Scotland.

Rachelle McCabe holds a doctorate from The University of Michigan where she studied with Theodore Lettvin and Gyorgy Sandor, a master's degree from The Juilliard School where she studied with Ania Dorfmann, and a bachelor's degree from The University of Washington where she studied with Béla Siki. As a teenager, she studied with Seattle teacher Willard Schultz. Rachelle lives in Corvallis Oregon with her husband Philip Humphrey and their Shetland sheepdog Olivia. They have two grown children in their twenties, Alexander and Elizabeth.

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 both 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." From Richard Dyer, the eminent critic of The Boston Globe: "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 transcription of Stravinsky's Firebird Suite. Critics praised it as "mightily impressive." Stereo Review described her disc of Bartok 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, 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 studied with Seattle's own Willard Schultz during her high school years. She joined the Juilliard faculty in 1978 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 enjoyed its sixth session in 2015. Also in 2015, McCabe performed and recorded the complete cycle of Beethoven's ten sonatas for violin and piano, with colleague Maria Larionoff.

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. Today she is a highly-sought teacher at the University of Washington, with students from around the world seeking admission to her studio.

McCabe performs regularly throughout the United States, and in September of 2011 she made her first visit to South Korea. In October of 2015 McCabe gave solo recitals in Beijing, and master classes at the International Beijing Piano Festival. She appears often as an invited jurist for international piano competitions, most recently in New Orleans, San Antonio, and Vancouver, Canada. In June of 2016 she was invited to serve on the jury of the Gina Bachauer International Piano Competition.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- BA – Brechemin Auditorium
- JPH – Jones Playhouse
- MT – Meany Theater
- MS – Meany Studio Theater
- WA – Walker Ames Room, Kane Hall

- Jan 14 Catch a Rising Star: Scott Cuellar, piano. 4:30 PM, BA.
- 21 Littlefield Organ Series: Jakyung Oh. 3:00 PM, WA

- Feb 1 Ethnomusicology Visiting Artist: Sepideh Raissadat, Classical Persian Music. 7:30 PM BA.
- 5 UW Symphony at Benaroya Hall. 7:30 PM.
- 7 Scholarship Chamber Group: Daisha. 7:30 PM, BA.
- 8 Brechemin Piano Series. 7:30 PM, BA.
- 9 Guitar Studio Recital. 7:30 PM, BA.
- 14 Jazz Innovations, Part I. 7:30 PM, BA.
- 15 Jazz Innovations, Part II. 7:30 PM, BA.
- 21 Music of Today. 7:30 PM, MT.
- 23 Faculty Recital: Craig Sheppard, piano. 7:30 PM, MT.
- 26 Voice Division Recital. 7:30 PM, BA.
- 27 Campus and Concert Bands. 7:30 PM, MT.
Baroque Ensemble. 7:30 PM, BA.

- Mar 1 Modern Ensemble. 7:30 PM, MT.
- 2 Chamber Singers and University Chorale. 7:30 PM, MT.
- 4 Intersections Series, 4:30 PM. (4:00 PM lecture by Jane Brown)
- 5 Studio Jazz Ensemble & Modern Band. 7:30 PM, MT.
- 8 Brechemin Piano Series. 7:30 PM, BA.
Wind Ensemble and Symphonic Band. 7:30 PM, MT.
Opera Workshop. 7:30 PM, MST.
- 9 UW Symphony. 7:30 PM, MT.
- 27 Master Class: Atar Arad, viola. 3:00 PM, BA.
- 28 Faculty Recital: Melia Watras, viola, with Atar Arad, viola. 7:30 PM, MT.