

Winter 1-16-2009

Marshall University Music Department Presents a Senior Recital, Blake Racer, voice

Blake Racer

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DEPARTMENT of MUSIC

presents a

Senior Recital Blake Racer, voice

accompanied by

Mark Smith, piano

also assisted by

Angela Crum, piccolo trumpet

Jenny Z. Morris, oboe

Dr. Elizabeth Reed Smith, Timothy Feverston, violin

Lindsay DiFatta, viola

James Kiger, cello

Mark Smith, harpsichord

Friday, January 16, 2009

Smith Recital Hall

8:00 p.m.

Program

“Großer Herr, o starker König”
from *Christmas Oratorio*, BWV 248

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685 – 1750)

Angela Crum, piccolo trumpet
Mark Smith, harpsichord

Cantata, BWV 82

I. Aria

“Ich habe genug. Ich habe den Heiland”

II. Recitative

“Ich habe genug! Mein Trost ist nur allein”

III. Aria

“Schlummert ein, ihr matten Augen”

IV. Recitative

“Mein Gott! Wann kommt das schöne: Nun!”

V. Aria

“Ich freue mich auf meinen Tod”

Jenny Z. Morris, oboe

Dr. Elizabeth Reed Smith, Timothy Feverston, violin

Lindsay DiFatta, viola

James Kiger, cello

Mark Smith, harpsichord

Intermission

This program is presented by the College of Fine Arts through the Department of Music, with the support of student activity funds. For more information about this or other music events, please call (304) 696-3117, or view our website at www.marshall.edu/cofa/music.

“Bella siccome un angelo”
from *Don Pasquale*

Gaetano Donizetti
(1797-1848)

Program Notes

Trois Comptines (4-5-6)
IV. Aserrín, aserrán
V. Petite fille de Paris
VI. Pito, pito, colorito

Federico Mompou
(1893-1987)

Dover Beach

Samuel Barber
(1910-1981)

Dr. Elizabeth Reed Smith, Timothy Feverston, violin
Lindsay DiFatta, viola
James Kiger, cello

West London
Anne Street
Things Our Fathers Loved
Charlie Rutlage

Charles Ives
(1874-1954)

The music of Johann Sebastian Bach did not originally receive the acclaim that it does today. Bach’s sons and contemporaries considered his compositions old fashioned. Maybe this was because Bach never left Germany to explore other musical genres. Since his career existed within the traditional musical demands of the church, Bach was not required to explore new genres such as opera. One of the most prolific composers of the Baroque era, Bach’s accomplishments include over two hundred cantatas, twenty-five large-scale choral works, over two hundred keyboard works, and nearly five hundred chorales and sacred songs.

Just as Bach composed new music for each Sunday service, he assembled the *Christmas Oratorio (Weihnachtsoratorium)* in 1734. Unlike the new music that premiered each Sunday, this oratorio was a patchwork of both previously written and new cantatas from 1733 and 1734. This oratorio is one of Bach’s longest and most complex works, spanning three hours. It was intended to be performed in six sections, one on each feast day of the Christmas season. Modern performances present the work either in its entirety or in two sections. Like Bach’s *Ascension Oratorio* and *Easter Oratorio*, the *Christmas Oratorio* is narrated by a tenor Evangelist. “Grosser herr” comes from the first cantata of the work which is to be performed on Christmas Day. The musical material for this aria, along with the first chorus of the section, originates from BWV 214, a cantata that Bach wrote commemorating the birthday of Maria Josepha, Queen of Poland.

Of Bach’s nearly two hundred cantatas, only twelve were composed for solo voice. *Ich habe genug* was composed in Leipzig for the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin, or Candlemas Day, which occurs on February 2 and commemorates the day that Mary brought the baby Jesus to a temple in Jerusalem for ritual sacrifices. The libretto, based on the account by St. Luke, does not reference biblical text, and the author is anonymous. This work contains three arias and two recitatives told in first person. Most of the work remains very lyrical, including the recitatives which exhibit bits of arioso lines. It differs from other Bach cantatas in that the forces used to perform the work remain the same throughout the entire piece. The first aria is often likened to the aria, “Erbarme dich, mein Gott,” from the *Passion According to Saint Matthew*. From the introduction of the second aria, the listener can discern that this section is a lullaby to the baby Jesus, while the final aria provides stark contrast with a dance character.

Don Pasquale is a drama buffo in three acts composed by Gaetano Donizetti, which premiered in Paris on January 3, 1843. The libretto was a collaboration between Donizetti and librettist Giovanni Ruffini, however the two can not take full credit. Their inspiration was an earlier libretto by Angelo Anelli, written for Pavesi’s opera, *Ser Marcantonio* (1810). The work was an instant success, and enjoyed premieres in Milan, Vienna, London, and New York, where

This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in performance. Mr. Racer is a student in the voice studio of Dr. David Castleberry.

the libretto was translated into English.

The opera begins with the elderly Don Pasquale, who is determined to marry so that he may have a wife and son as more suitable heirs than his nephew, Ernesto, who is only interested in the youthful widow Norina. Don Pasquale consults his physician, Dr. Malatesta, about his ability to father a child at such a late age. Acting with Ernesto and Norina, Malatesta jumps immediately at the opportunity to suggest his "sister," Sofronia, as Don Pasquale's new wife ("Bella siccome un angelo"). Unfortunately for Don Pasquale, Malatesta truthfully has no sister named Sofronia. Rather, the tale is simply a scheme among three friends to teach Don Pasquale a lesson about marrying so late in life with such a motive.

Federico Mompou was born in Barcelona, Spain. He left for Paris in 1911 to study piano, but found public performance to be overwhelming for his shy personality, and chose to focus on composition. After completing school, he continued working in Paris to boost his career, until Nazi occupation of Paris in 1941 when he returned to Barcelona.

Mompou is well-known for his miniaturist compositional style. His compositions tend to be short, and display a very improvisatory character. Despite the structural simplicity of his music, records show that Mompou had a tendency to constantly revise his compositions. His music is often based on Spanish-Catalonian nursery rhyme, and is meant to evoke moods that accompany precise memories from life. He is fond of ostinato figures, meditative sounds, and the imagery of bells.

The song set appearing here is the second set of *Tres Comptines* that was published in 1943. *Aserrín aserrán* is a popular folk melody and children's song used in Spanish-speaking countries across Europe and Latin America. Like many folk songs, the text varies by tradition. The text chosen by Mompou has little poetic significance. Rather, the rhyme scheme precedes rhetoric. *Aserrín aserrán* may be played several ways. You-Tube parents post videos that range from clapping games, to bouncing the child in their laps, to jump roping. Curiously, Mompou inserts his familiar bell tones at the beginning and end of the piece. Perhaps this reflects his memory of playing the game while growing up near a bell manufacturing company in Barcelona.

Traditionally, song sets use a uniform language, but Mompou chose to insert a French counting-out rhyme between two Spanish songs. Mompou's native language was Catalan, which does not appear in this group at all, but is the language he used for his first set of *Tres Comptines*. *Petite fille de Paris* is played much like children in other cultures play *eeny meeny miny moe*. The person who is "it" will begin reciting and point at each participant in time to the rhyme or by syllable. Like hot potato, the last participant to be pointed, is out. The game begins again, and this continues until one person remains as the winner.

Like *Petite fille de Paris*, *Pito pito, colorito* is also a counting-out game. Translated, the word pito means whistle, but in this context is a child's reference to a bird. Despite the attractiveness of this patter rhyme, the text is meaningless. Internet bloggers recall stories of tortuous older siblings adjusting the word, fuera,

to three syllables in order to twist the arm of fate at the end of the game.

Samuel Barber was raised in West Chester, Pennsylvania. A very articulate child, he composed his first musical work at age seven. At age ten, he attempted his first opera, and at age fourteen was a member of the first class to enter the Curtis Institute where he studied composition, piano, and voice. Despite the limited success of his operas, his orchestral music was premiered by several of the world's greatest conductors including Arturo Toscanini, who rarely conducted music by American composers. Barber's piano and voice pieces were premiered by artists such as Vladimir Horowitz, Leontyne Price, and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. His love for poetry, combined with his deep appreciation for the voice, make his setting of *Dover Beach* one of the most successful compositions of his career.

Matthew Arnold's poetry reflects a pessimism that, according to written accounts, is uncharacteristic of his friendly and genuine personality. His description of landscapes is a technique used in Romantic poetry, while his plaintive rationalistic outlook is a trait of Modernist poetry. The text begins in a rather melancholy manner, which Barber has set to a hollow musical texture. The speaker elicits imagery of the intersection of a calm ocean with majestic cliffs. This natural union is a euphemistic symbol that sparks the speaker's terrifying realization of a Godless world. The ebb and flow of the sea and the reduction of cliffs to pebbles over centuries visualize how the cycle of the human suffering erodes faith in God. References to Sophocles suggest that this concern for the path of humanity is timeless. In the case of Matthew Arnold's poem, a world of increasing technology and materialism prevails over a waning sea of faith. From this desolate perspective, humans have one truth: We exist without a higher power; and without the principles that accompany faith, humans will continue to suffer this painful cycle.

Charles Ives had the ability to capture the true essence of American life in his music. Ives was raised the son of a Union Army bandmaster in Danbury, CT. Between 1912 and 1919, Ives gathered a collection of his songs, which he personally published, and titled *114 Songs*. Each song heard this evening comes from this collection. Unfortunately, his music was mostly rejected in his lifetime. Knowing that he would not be able to survive as a working musician, he turned to a very successful career in insurance.

The Ives family was very active and prominent in social issues of the time, including abolition of slavery and poverty. This influence may have led him to Matthew Arnold's poetry, which, as noted before, opens the reader's eyes to a world less beautiful than the one we imagine. "West London" creates a juxtaposition of a street beggar and the lofty upper-class passing by on daily business. In this case, the upper-class disregards the beggar's condition, so she does not bother asking for pity from the self-righteous aliens who enjoy their lives at the expense of her exclusion. Instead, she looks for comfort from people who share a common fate. At the end of the song, we are guided not by the church, or the finest of society, but instead by a lowly and "immoral" tramp in the direction

of hope for a better time. Ives quotes the hymn tune, "There is a fountain of blood," first in F major, and after a long pause, again in F# major. The inconclusive modulation and cadence suggest distance- perhaps the image of someone looking from the outside into a church that has cast the invisible needy from their steps, or a gaze into the mind of the beggar who remains hopeful for the compassion of God in the midst of her misery in such a callused society.

"Ann Street" is a tribute to the small-town American visiting the big city for the first time- New York City to be precise. The text is taken from an article that appeared in the New York Herald around 1921 when the song was written. Ann Street runs through Manhattan and does indeed cross Nassau Street, where the famous Bennett Building stands. True to the nature of Ann Street, the song is short and simplistic in form, and comes to an abrupt ending.

Ives's musical abilities spanned from piano and organ to drums in his father's band. He was skilled in American vernacular music, and also served as an organist in a Protestant church. This wide musical exposure led to Ives's fascination with composing music that had an American voice, which he often accomplished through patching bits of folk and hymn tunes familiar to any American. This is evident in his piece, "Things Our Fathers Loved." Many of his songs reflect a question of values, including "Things Our Fathers Loved," which ends with the statement, "...but they [the songs] sing in my soul of the things our fathers loved." Musically, however, Ives seems to end with an upward inflection, as if asking a question about what these "things" really were.

"Charlie Rutlage" comes from a collection of songs by John Lomax titled *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. This book was his effort to preserve the cowboy way of life, which was disappearing at the turn of the twentieth century. This setting that Ives has composed is a collaboration between voice and piano, as the two are equally important in telling the story of Charlie Rutlage. The center section is a narrative where the pianist creates undulating tension that snowballs until the dramatic death of the cow puncher. Also included in this section is vocal assistance from the pianist, a humorous technique common in Ives's music.