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Strange Bedfellows: The Trumpet Finds New Partners

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Student Recital

2010-11 Season

74th Concert

Sunday 17 October 2010
Dalton Center Recital Hall
3:00 p.m.

ERIN YANACEK, Trumpet

“Strange Bedfellows: The Trumpet Finds New Partners”

Eric Ewazen
b. 1954

Trio for Trumpet, Violin, and Piano

I. Andante

IV. Allegro Molto

with

Charlotte Munn-Wood, Violin

Robert Hjelmstad, Piano

Erin Yanacek
b. 1989

Refractions

with

Peter Breithaupt, Percussion

Paul Hindemith
1895-1963

Concerto for Trumpet, Bassoon, and String Orchestra

III. Vivace

with

Henry Koperski, Bassoon

Robert Hjelmstad, Piano

Thomas Stevens
b. 1938

Variations on Clifford Intervals

with

Sam Weber, Double Bass

Peter Breithaupt, Percussion

intermission



Strange Bedfellows:

The trumpet finds new partners

An Honors College thesis recital
by Erin Yanacek

October 17th, 3:00 pm
Dalton center recital hall



Program Notes*

Ewazen- Trio for Trumpet, Violin, & Piano (1992)

Eric Ewazen is an American composer born in Cleveland, OH. His works for brass have found international popularity, and this piece was commissioned by Chris Gekker. It is play on Johann Brahms' *Trio in E flat Major op. 40* for horn, violin, and piano, and clearly borrows formal and stylistic ideas from that piece. Ewazen uses the trumpet heroically and dramatically, but also lyrically. This piece explores a wide range of coloristic possibilities, and is over 20 minutes in length when all four movements are played. We will perform the first movement which is serene and peaceful, and the last which is a joyous dance.

Yanacek- Refractions (2010)

Wine glasses are used as a set of percussion instruments in this piece. Each of the glasses is filled with a different amount of water to generate a different pitch when rubbed or struck. This piece stemmed from childhood experiences in which I annoyed my parents by making music on glasses at restaurants. Although it is fun to create music out of something so unconventional, the wine glasses are a rather containing medium. This piece simply became a playful, conversational exchange between the percussion and trumpet, stretching both instruments to achieve a wide array of sounds. The ambient and shimmery tone of the two instruments resonated with me and reminded me of light refracting through water.

Hindemith- Concerto for Trumpet, Bassoon, and String Orchestra (1949)

This double concerto calls for an unusual instrument combination indeed. The idiosyncrasies of the bassoon and of the trumpet are clearly quite different, providing a healthy challenge when working to blend. Rhythmically driven, this short third movement has the feel of a Scherzo, or a musical joke. Note the canons that provide volatile interactions among the three instruments.

Stevens- Variations on Clifford Intervals (1983)

I was fortunate to be able to spend a week studying with Thomas Stevens this summer. He is known among trumpet players for his noteworthy 30+ year career as principal trumpet of the LA Philharmonic, and wrote this piece when he was exploring avant-garde composition in the 1980's. The title references Clifford Brown, a jazz trumpeter from the early 20th century. Stevens acquired a recording of Brown practicing and noticed that there were several licks that were repeated over and

*Whoever finds the most puns and double entendres in these program notes wins a prize!

over in different keys. Stevens wrote this set of variations on those licks. The piece is not fully notated, leaving room for interpretation by the performers.

Stravinsky- *Octet for Wind Instruments (1923)*

Conceived in 1923, this piece represents an entirely new, neoclassical direction in Stravinsky's composition. The *Octet for Winds* defines Stravinsky's effort to return to the classical form and push away from Romantic emotionalism. He was already known for his collaboration with the Ballet Russe in Paris for productions such as *The Firebird (1910)* and *The Rite of Spring (1913)*, both large orchestral pieces, but the unusual instrumentation in *Octet* was a way to make a statement and avoid a homogenous sound. A new blend and a distinct timbre was created, hearkening back to the days of mixed consorts.

The piece itself is very structured: the first movement is in sonata form, the second represents a theme and variations, and the final movement comes full circle to a classic rondo form. Stravinsky's marriage of old and new techniques creates an eclectic composition. He trumpets diversity with octatonic scales, diatonicism, pandiatonicism, note doublings, and blue notes. Harmonically, he always returns to a tonic cadence to keep the piece pleasing for the ears. Meanwhile, he calls back the classical era by creating an Apollonian aesthetic that generates a dream of the god of order, harmony and reason. Stravinsky also uses the *Dies Irae* chant in the theme and variations. The theme and variations changes moods, with a march-like theme in the second variation, a waltz in the third, a can-can in the fourth, and a fugue to conclude. The final movement makes use of ragtime rhythms. Stravinsky must have acquired much of his jazz influence following his permanent move to France in 1920, an era that encouraged scores of new freedoms and experimentation.

This piece was dedicated to Vera Soudeikine (nee de Bosset). Stravinsky met Vera in 1920 and fell madly in love. She would eventually become his second wife.

Thesis Project Summary

Musically and technically, it was challenging to partner with “strange bedfellows,” or instruments that the trumpet would not usually play with in chamber music. While the trumpet is generally used as a militaristic and loud instrument, these pieces demonstrate that the trumpet can also provide a lyrical and melodic voice, thereby operating beyond its traditional roles. Also, no matter how peculiar the instrumentation of a piece happens to be, we as musicians must learn to blend our sounds and match one another stylistically to make music together.

Our ensembles worked to blend our generally incompatible tones, and in most cases we had to consider balance or else the trumpet would be too loud. I stretched my playing in the direction of delicacy, and the bassoonist and violinist, for example, made their sounds somewhat bolder to match the trumpet. In rehearsals we also learned that the different types of instruments have different tendencies when it comes to style of articulation, use of the breath, and note shaping. For example, when playing with Charlotte on the Eric Ewazen trio, we noticed that he had written “a niente,” or “to nothing” at the end of some of our phrases. We were shaping these phrases differently and when asking ourselves why, we realized that it’s because the violin is capable of getting much softer than the trumpet—truly “to nothing”—but it is physically implausible for the trumpet to do the same.

The process of putting this recital together has been a great learning experience for me. I learned how to juggle being an artistic director, performer, and composer for the same program. The challenge of wearing so many different hats taught me about pacing, composing myself, and about releasing control to trust that things will work out. And they always seemed to! I also learned that rehearsals were a little bit more effective if I brought food for everyone. Unfortunately, I learned the hard way that when sending out a mass e-mail about my “recital,” spellcheck would be of no help if I left out the “i.” Embarrassment ensued.

I was very fortunate to have peers who were so willing to work with me. It took a significant amount of commitment from everyone to learn this music individually and in rehearsals, and I am lucky that this was accomplished so professionally and with such a great attitude. Also, thank you to my family, friends, and teachers for their continuous help and support. You have been instrumental in the production of this recital.

We hope that you will join us for a reception in the green room following this performance. Thank you for being here today!