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Tenor Trombone Recital

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Tenor Trombone Recital

Lee Honors College Thesis

Rebecca Haines

16 March, 2014

Western Michigan University

Abstract

This Lee Honors College Thesis consisted of approximately 180 hours of preparation of performance materials, research of compositions to be performed, and composition of program notes. The recital was held on Sunday March 16, 2014 at 5:00 pm in the Dalton Center Recital Hall at Western Michigan University. Works performed included solos for trombone accompanied by student pianist J.J. Treadway and a trio featuring student trumpeter Bonni Lee Beebe. Repertoire included works for trombone by von Weber, Hindemith, Blacher, Jørgensen, and Šulek. Works performed were composed during the Romantic and Modern eras. Approximately 50 audience members were present, including members of the thesis committee. Program notes were distributed to the audience members upon arrival to the venue. This recital satisfied the final performance requirement for the completion of a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Trombone Performance. Rebecca Haines is an undergraduate student of Dr. Steven Wolfinbarger at Western Michigan University.

Trombone Recital Program Notes

Rebecca Haines

Romance for trombone and piano

Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826)

Carl Maria von Weber was a German composer, conductor, and writer during the Romantic era. He studied composition with Abbé Vogler. During his lifetime, he held positions conducting various operas in Europe. Perhaps best known for his opera *Der Freischütz*, von Weber's works represented the epitome of Romantic ideals. Many of his works, musical and literary, drew inspiration from German folklore, human experience, and fantasy.

Von Weber's Romance for trombone and piano is a very popular work in standard trombone repertoire. There is speculation that the piece was originally written for bassoon, so this Romance would be the most often performed transcription for trombonists. The work is characterized by bold rubato statements and strong dynamic contrasts in both instrumental voices. It utilizes the wide range of the tenor trombone, calling for intense peaks in the upper register as well as low extremes during the opening and ending of the solo. A performer must look to Romantic era performance practices in order to play the work in an authentic way. The Romantics were expressive, somewhat dark-natured artists who believed that human emotion and experience should be conveyed without restraint in one's music. Von Weber's Romance captures this Romantic ideal through a piece that is enjoyable for performers and audience alike.

Sonata for trombone and piano

Paul Hindemith (1895-1963)

Paul Hindemith was a German composer, violinist, violist, and conductor born in Hanau, Germany. Hindemith studied at the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt am Main with violinist Adolph Rebner. Early in his career, he became the leader of the Frankfurt Opera Orchestra and founded the Amar-Hindemith Quartet, touring Europe and recording. On July 31st, 1921, Hindemith's compositions were premiered at the very first Donaueschingen Chamber Music performances, now a world famous festival for the advancement of contemporary music. Next, Hindemith focused his efforts on bolstering Turkish music education and founding the Turkish State Opera and Ballet. His work in Turkey ended in 1938 when he and his wife relocated to Switzerland because of rising tensions towards Jews in Germany. By 1940, the Hindemiths had immigrated to the United States where Paul Hindemith taught at Yale and lectured at Harvard University. Eventually, Hindemith moved back to Europe to continue conducting and recording, and he later died of pancreatitis near his hometown.

Hindemith's works include late-romantic and expressionist compositions. Popular works include *Kammermusik* (Chamber Music) (1922-1927), *Mathis der Maler* (1933-1935), *Gerbrauchsmusik* (Music for Use), *Symphony in Bb* (1951), and *Symphonic Metamorphosis of Themes by Carl Maria von Weber* (1943). In his works, Hindemith

combined 20th century stylistic practices with German folk tunes. His music was tonal but not usually diatonic, modulating freely from one tonal center to another. The Sonata for Trombone and Piano falls within a compositional series of instrumental sonatas including works written for flute, trumpet, oboe, clarinet, and bassoon, to name a few.

The Sonata for Trombone and Piano begins with an exposition occurring within the first movement, *Allegro moderato maestoso*. The development and transformation follow in the next two movements, *Allegretto grazioso* and *Allegro pesante: Lied des Raufbolds*. Although the themes from the first movement recur at the beginning of the last movement, *Allegro moderato maestoso*, the recapitulation does not occur until the end of the final movement where the original statement of the theme recurs.

Divertimento for trumpet, trombone, and piano

Boris Blacher (1903-1975)

Boris Blacher was a German composer who wrote operas, ballets, symphonies, chamber music, and electronic works. He was born in Niu-chang, China and studied piano in his youth in Siberia. Like Hindemith, Blacher studied at the Hoch Conservatory in Germany. The Nazis believed his work was anti-German, so Blacher published a handful of his works under false names. Blacher was appointed to the position of composition professor at the Dresden Conservatory from 1937 until 1939, but his teaching career was cut short by the Nazis who did not agree with his teachings. By 1948, he was teaching composition at the Hoch Conservatory and experimenting with serialism in his works. Despite the opposition of the Nazis, Blacher found success traveling around Europe and the United States, receiving several commissions throughout his lifetime, including composing pieces for the Cleveland Orchestra and the BBC Orchestra.

Divertimento for trumpet, trombone, and piano is a seven-movement chamber work. Themes are not reused between movements, creating an interesting series of musical snapshots during the brief movements. The first movement, *Allegro*, is a jovial movement that introduces the character of each instrument in the ensemble. Movement two, *Andantino*, contains an aria-like melody in the trombone balanced by a swelling piano accompaniment in a 6/8 meter. The third movement, *Presto*, features the trumpet playing a heroic theme alongside the piano. Movement four, *Moderato*, presents a march-like theme with a twist. Syncopation in the wind duet and piano voice creates musical interest and adds an unexpected lilt to the movement. Movement five, *Allegretto*, features a duet with piano accompaniment between the trumpet and trombone. Following this duet, the piano is featured as a solo instrument in movement six, quarter note = 56. Much like the previous material, the sixth movement explores modulating tonality and utilities chromatic harmonies. Finally, the work culminates during the seventh movement, *Presto*, with all three instrumentalists present during an exciting asymmetrical-metered finale.

Romance for Trombone and Piano

Axel Jørgensen (1881-1947)

Axel Jørgensen was a Danish composer and violinist who studied at the Royal Danish Academy of Music. He performed with the Copenhagen Philharmonic Orchestra but spent the bulk of his career with the Royal Danish Orchestra, where he performed until the end of his life. It was there that Jørgensen met Anton Hansen, the orchestra's solo trombonist, for whom it is believed Jørgensen composed this work. Jørgensen went on to compose several works for brass instruments, including his *Capriccio Orientale* for trumpet and orchestra as well as a trombone concerto. Similar to Blacher's *Divertimento*, Jørgensen also wrote pieces for trumpet, trombone, and piano chamber ensembles.

The *Romance for Trombone and Piano* was originally premiered in Copenhagen by Anton Hansen with orchestral accompaniment. It was well received upon its premiere, likely due to the beautiful lyricism in both the solo and piano voices. The piece is a tonal work, characterized by dramatic dynamic swells and an almost entirely rubato style.

Sonata for Trombone and Piano ("*Vox Gabrieli*")

Stjepan Šulek (1914-1986)

"The essential thing for an artist is to have something to say and know how to say it; then his work will, itself, be modern." – Stjepan Šulek

Croatian composer and violinist Stjepan Šulek studied at the Music Academy in Zagreb with Czech violinist Vaclav Huml and composer Biago Bersa. While he is best known as a composer, Šulek also toured as first violin with the Zagreb Quintet and with a trio including pianist Ivo Macek and cellist Antonio Janigro. Šulek composed eight symphonies, two operas, ten concertos, four classical concertos for orchestra, a collection of vocal music, and many sonatas. While Šulek is recognized as a great composer in his home country of Yugoslavia, his works are not often performed outside of the country. Šulek is also the founder of today's Zagreb Radio Chamber Orchestra.

While Šulek is most famous for his piano sonatas, the *Sonata for Trombone and Piano* is highly acclaimed as a gemstone of standard trombone repertoire among trombonists. The work gained huge popularity after it was commissioned by the International Trombone Association in 1973. The *Sonata* has been performed and recorded by famous trombonists including Ralph Sauer, Christian Lindberg, and Alain Trudel.

Although Šulek's works belong to the 20th century, the *Sonata for Trombone and Piano* could be described as a neo-classical work combining elements from different eras. Šulek was very much influenced by Baroque music style, placing emphasis on melodic elements in his works. This characteristic follows through in the *Sonata* with

soaring melodies rising above the dense harmonic textures in the piano. Many Romantic Era elements can also be found in the works of Šulek, as illustrated by the highly expressive nature of his music.

In this work, Šulek showcases the expressive nature of the trombone through dynamic and melodic extremes of the instrument, creating a challenging and satisfying work for both instrumentalists. *Vox Gabrieli* translates to “voice of Gabriel,” referring to the angel Gabriel from the Bible. In the Old Testament, Gabriel appears to the prophet Daniel to explain Daniel’s visions. Later, it is Gabriel who delivers the news to the Virgin Mary of the upcoming births of Jesus Christ and John the Baptist, major figures in the Christian faith. Šulek does not offer programmatic context for this work, but I believe this sonata tells a story of Gabriel delivering a message from God. The varying styles within the piece outline the ways in which Gabriel delivers his messages on earth, ranging from firm and authoritative statements to soft words filled with understanding and comfort. These are the ways in which listeners received the word of God from the angel, and Šulek has captured this rhetoric to produce a work that will truly speak to listeners.

Following traditional sonata form, the exposition begins in Bb minor with fiery and unrelenting melodic line in the trombone, punctuated against rolling sextuplets in the piano. As the melodic line eases into an echoing tritone call, the music moves into the development. Here, the music evolves into a light and somewhat rubato section with the melody passing back and forth between the trombone and the piano. Evolving once again, a lyrical melodic section ensues with the trombone voice soaring over a rich and pulsing piano accompaniment. Overall, the development is characterized by a singing tone, further enhanced by the playful interaction between the trombone and piano, yet still authoritative in the melodic statements as if to reveal the persistence in the voice of Gabriel. Next, the piece enters into the transition with tumultuous melodies passing between the piano and trombone, building tension until the piano cadences back into Bb minor at the recapitulation. Finally, the piece recapitulates into the main theme from the exposition and ends with a powerful final statement to bring the listener full-circle. The Šulek Sonata is truly one of the most exciting pieces in all of trombone repertoire.

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