

A Senior Harp Recital

“Poetry in Music”

Presented in partial fulfillment of
HONRS 499

by

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Senior Honors Recital
Rachel Browne, Harp
Assisted by Balie Gren, Flute, and Wendy Gutana, Cello
(Theme: Poetry in Music)

Program Notes

I hope to bring to you an appreciation for music by exploring not only the music theory and historical context of harp repertoire, but also to tie together the art of sound to poetry, or the art of words. Music and poetry go hand in hand. Some music is based on poetry, other music expresses ineffable truths: music *as* poetry. Though neither words may fully express music's inherent speech, or music the specific power of words, perhaps they enhance one another in artistic creation.

The poetry in my selected pieces came about in various ways. Dello Joio's *Bagatelles*, I assume, were composed without any use of words or imagery, but words seemed to me to spring forth from the music. The 16th Century Italian Lute Pieces, arranged for harp in the 20th Century, have a longer poetic history than the other pieces. Many of the short pieces were originally sung; in fact they originated as poems before adapted to instrumental music played on the lute, and hundreds of years later, on the harp, flute and cello. Carlos Salzedo said the title of "(IDYLLIC POEM)" provides an "optional basis for the poetical imagination of the player." The *Sonate* by Hindemith includes as its third movement a *Lied*, whose melody was inspired by a poem by Holty. Finally, the *Impromptu-Caprice* by Gabrielle Pierne, a wonderfully Romantic work, was not conceived at all on the basis of poetry but perhaps it may inspire poetic thoughts within the listener.

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***Bagatelles* Norman Dello Joio**

The term "bagatelle" refers not to a specific form; New Grove Online defines it as a "trifle, a short piece of music in light vein." A bagatelle might be dance-like, meditative, or satirical. Composers may combine several in a set, titling each one individually.

Norman Dello Joio brings to his music a candid expressiveness not defined solely by 12-tone of the 20th century, but also by his love of 19th-century Italian opera, Catholic Church music, and, most surprisingly, popular music and jazz from the '20's and '30's. He studied with Paul Hindemith in the '40s at the Yale School of music, who encouraged him to discover his own musical voice, let traditional forms be what they may be. Dello Joio's music is candid, playful, and well-crafted. A love for Gregorian chant and a profound interest in religious subjects is prominent in his music.

I. *Andante affetuoso e moderato*

I wanted to know what inspired the beautiful music of Dello Joio on my music stand. As I carefully studied the printed page, translating symbols into sounds, words began to come to mind, many of them fitting in perfect rhythm to the notes, somewhat expressing the impression upon my soul that his music had made. Recently I was amazed to discover the composer's fascination with Gregorian chant in research.

The salient melody, simple and modal, floats above an underlying tension created by non-harmonic tones. The opening motive, “*Who has heard?*” recurs several times. It receives climactic development in the middle of the movement, but here is very simple and pure. The opening motive played in double-octaves and ornamented, this time in *mf* dynamic, announces the arrival of something:

*Who hath heard?
Who hath heard, and hath believed?
Like a tender root He sprung from dry ground.
The Arm of the Lord, has been revealed,
Lifted up the humble and laid down the proud.*

A melody climbs diatonically under added-note chords, the Cb and F non-chord tones expressing the idea of ‘grief’:

*Jesus Christ, the Light of Life!
A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,*

Tension builds as left-hand triplets of open fourths underlay right-hand chords of quartal duplets. Words are elusive here, but the tension builds into a climax. A pentatonic glissando carries the words “our pain:”

Surely He hath borne our pain!

A *pp* dynamic enters immediately, and is reflective:

*We all like sheep have wandered astray;
'Twas for our shame, that He was slain.*

A right-hand melody descends, leading into a restatement of the opening “*who hath heard*” motive:

*He will see fruit and His reward
Shall be them
Who hath heard!*

II. *Allegro, gioioso*

Allegro, gioioso conjures to the imagination some kind of wild and colorful dance. A highly technically demanding movement, it involves rhythmic accents in difficult ranges of the instrument, melodic jumps over nontraditional harmonic patterns, and several rhythmic hemiolae and unbalanced phrases. Melodies flash in and out, never materializing. Keys imply colorful modalities of Spain or perhaps the Middle East. The rhythm is volatile. A strong underlying pulse on beats 1 and 4 of the 6/8 rhythm is often overtaken by syncopation; hops, jumps and twists, turns and claps of a joyous and wild dance. Dynamics are *fortissimo*, full of energy.

ABA in form, the A section has (roughly) a tonality of F major, established by the key signature, as well as the opening two F major chords. Could the next few chords be labeled ‘I’ with minor ii chord added? A jazzy bundle describes it. Four-bar phrase groups gain rhythmic complexity, and accents on beats 2 and 4 alternate with accents on beats 3 and 6.

The B section is in the signature of 5 flats and A-natural, suggesting a tonality of Bb minor, but the notes F and C are prominent, just like in section A (in the key of F major); Dello Joio plays with an extended dominant. Or is he introducing a new mode? A climax occurs in F

major chords over a B-natural, and we sojourn to C major, short melodies calling like birds and “hee-hawing” like donkeys. Whatever the picture, it is colorful!

III. *Adagietto, calmo*

Adagietto, calmo is so named for its pervading sense of peace, and yet elements of harmony and rhythm express a sub-surface tension. Many non-chord tones appear throughout the piece, borrowed from foreign tonalities. Harmonic analysis is elusive; one might chalk it up to the influence of 20’s and 30’s jazz that Dello Joio so loved.

An open octave motive ties together the movement. The gentle rhythm moves the music forward in time under developing tension, and yet maintains for the listener something steady, an idea frozen. The motive is like breathing; it sustains life steadily, regularly, under increasingly complex harmonies.

Divine Spirit Breathing
Mysteries Revealing.
Words of life you speak to form us new.
Groanings now unspoken,
longings of Creation
Await the Day your Sons will be like You.

16th Century Italian Lute Pieces. **Arr. Dewey Owens**
I. BALLETTO from “Il Conte Orlando” Simone Molinaro
1599

The balletto appeared in Italian instrumental (particularly lute) music mainly in 1561-1599. A courtly dance, this balletto flows in a lilting 3/4 time.

II. VILLANELLA Unknown Composer,
End of 16th Cent.

Cotgrave’s *Dictionarie* (1611) defines a villanelle as ‘a country dance, round or song.’ In Italy in the sixteenth century, the term described a style of poetry, written in stanzas, usually about nature or love, using very simple language.

III. PASSACAGLIA Lodovico Runcalli
1692

The passacaglia began as a I-IV-V-I guitar-strumming formula, but in 1627, at the publication of several works by Frescobaldi, it gained more prominence. Many passacaglias were more restrained, in a slow tempo, smooth, and in a minor key. Runcalli’s includes a more lively central section.

IV. SICILIANA Unknown Composer,
End of 16th Cent.

Sicilianas were in the the 16th century musical pieces written to poetry of a kind called the *strambotto siciliano*. One imagines a poet singing with his lute, evoking melancholy or piety.

V. GAGLIARDA Vincenzo Galilei
End of 16th Cent.

In Italian, *gagliarda* means “vigorous, robust.” It originated as a courtly dance of northern Italy, usually in triple meter. Many *gagliardas* employ the use of hemiola, or an apparent shifting of downbeats, to liven the steps of the dancers.

“(Idyllic Poem)”..... Carlos Salzedo

Carlos Salzedo is famous for his technique of harp playing that has revolutionized schools of harpists internationally. Born in France of Spanish heritage, he won the Prix de Rome in composition and entered the Paris Conservatory at age 11, graduating with *premiere prix* in both piano and harp at age 16. Successive posts afforded him opportunity to compose as well as perform and instruct, producing his 50 works or collections of short works, as well as hundreds of transcriptions for harp.

New mechanical innovations of the instrument during his lifetime afforded him the discovery of many new special effects and chromatic possibilities. Salzedo comments that the ancient harp “bears no more resemblance to the modern 20th Century harp than the ox cart does to the jet plane.” Hence his marvelous output in high-quality music for that instrument.

“(Idyllic Poem)”, composed in 1918, is one of a set of preludes included in his text Modern Study of the Harp, its purpose not only to challenge technically but to “reveal new horizons to those who seek for pure artistic emotion.” Impressionistic in style, its tone colors and special effects combine to express the ineffable.

***Sonate Fur Harfe*..... Paul Hindemith**

Paul Hindemith, born in Frankfurt, was the most prominent German composer during the inter-war years. A professional violinist and violist, he could also play every instrument for which he had written a sonata, composing roughly one sonata per year of his 40-year career. He did not, however, play organ or harp.

Hindemith assimilated new tonal ideas of the 20th century with celerity. As experiments in tumultuous music of the ‘20’s separated him from audiences, he later returned to a more harmonious linear counterpoint and systematic organization during the 30’s. His theory text, *The Craft of Music Composition*, set forth a new set of tonal relationships based on tension and the harmonic series in 1935. He completed the *Sonate fur Harfe* in 1939.

A programmatic work, the imagery revolves around a Gothic cathedral.

I.

“On the parvis [the covered area surrounding the door], in front of a cathedral, the door opens, one listens to the organ.”

Three large quartal chords open a 4-bar phrase of theme one. A chromatic transitional melody in the bass leads into theme two, a broad melody consisting of many open fifths. The movement evokes a sense of awe and grandiose, while at the same time an underlying mysteriousness. Hindemith’s sonata form breaks away from the traditional classical sonata form; themes one and two appear sporadically and in various keys, his chromatic harmonies highly expressive.

II.

“The children play on the parvis.”

The description “*Lebhaft*” or “lively” certainly fits its mood. The movement contains two contrasting characters. One easily pictures a game of tag. Theme one, a grouping of five short phrases, is light. Theme two is husky, grown-up. (It enters after a fortissimo glissando in measure 22, is interrupted by theme one, and continues in measure 41.) Listen for high-pitched sing-song voice of character 1 saying: “Catch me if you can,” and the ensuing chase of character 2. I see the final chord as a loud laugh: “HA!” as themes collide. Tag, you’re it!

III. *LIED*

Hindemith must have been well-schooled in the Romantic style of the *lieder* (songs) of Schubert and Brahms, the generation of German composers before him. The new style of *lieder*, however, might have sent them into shock! He incorporates a new sense of tonality, expressive and elusive rhythms to convey the text. Nonetheless, the movement carries almost Romantic warmth. Its stanza-like form, flexible dynamics, wide range of emotion, and a fascination with morose subjects and the supernatural are Romantic traits.

L.H. Christoph Holty (1748-1776), of Hanover, became a student of theology at Gottingen, where he co-founded the Gotlinger Dichterbund, a close society of young poets, but died of consumption while young. His poetry reflects his love for *Volklied* and a delight in nature, but often in a melancholy tone. Increasingly after 1933, many of Hindemith’s works were banned in Nazi Germany for their “cultural Bolshevism” and he set his music to despairing texts, reflecting an ‘inner emigration.’

Der Auftrag

Ihr Freunde, hänget, wann ich gestorben bin,
die kleine Harfe hinter dem Altar auf,
wo an der Wand die Totenkränze
manches verstorbene Mädchens schimmern.

Der Küster zeigt dann freundlich
dem Reisenden
die kleine Harfe, rauscht mit dem roten Band,
daß an der Harfe festgeschlungen,
unter den goldenen Saiten flattert.

„Oft,“ sagt er staunend,
„tönen im Abendrot
von selbst die Saiten,
leise wie Bienton;
die Kinder, hergelockt
vom Kirchhof,
hörten’s und sah’n, wie die Kränze bebten.“

**Last Request*

Friends please hang when I am gone
my little harp behind the altar
where on the wall the funeral wreaths
Of many a deceased maiden do gleam.

The church sexton will then be able to
show visitors
my little harp, and how the red ribbon still
flutters that is tied firmly to the harp
Under the golden strings.

„Often,“ he will say amazed,
“the strings resound
on their own at the setting of sun with
soft sounds like bees;
this the children who have visited
the church graveyard
have often heard and have seen how the
wreaths tremble.”

*English translation provided by Dr. Ronald Warner

Impromptu-Caprice.Gabriel Pierne

An 'impromptu' may be so named for the whimsical nature with which it was composed, or the spontaneous development of all its elements as if it were flowing from the musician's hands for the very first time. The piece opens in a mesh of arpeggios and trills, as if the harpist were composing on stage. These fragments soon lead into a lyric melody. What a beautiful love song it appears to be! It recalls the rhythm of a ballad, its harmonies standard but beautiful, the harmonic rhythm comforting.

The caprice section is comprised of several short 8-bar phrases, its rhythm energetic and conjures up visions of a spritely dance.

Pierne by the use of rapid arpeggiated trills transitions once again into the first melody, this time played with new found conviction. The impromptu melody suggests the confession of an undying love:

O my love's like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June:
O my Luve's like the melody
That's sweetly play'd in tune!

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun;
And I will luv thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

(*A Red, Red Rose*, Robert Burns, excerpt)

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RACHEL BROWNE
harp
in a
SENIOR HONORS RECITAL
assisted by
Balle Gren, flute
Rowena Gutana, cello

- Bagatelles for HarpNorman Dello Joio
I. Andante affetuoso e moderato (b.1913)
II. Allegro gioioso
III. Adagietto, calmo
- 16th and 17th Century Italian Lute Pieces arr. Dewey Owens
I. Balletto from "Il Conte Orlando" (1599) Simone Molinaro
(ca.1565-1650)
II. Villanella (late 16th Century)*Unknown*
III. Passacaglia (1692) Lodovico Runcalli
IV. Siciliana (late 16th Century)*Unknown*
V. GagliardaVincenzo Galilei
(1520-1591)
- ... Intermission ...
- "(Idyllic Poem)"Carlos Salzedo
(1885-1961)
- Sonate für HarfePaul Hindemith
I. Mässig schnell (1895-1963)
II. Lebhaft
III. Sehr langsam
- Impromptu-CapriceGabriel Pierné
(1863-1937)

Rachel Browne is a student of Elizabeth Richter.

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