

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
SCHOOL OF MUSIC
Roy Barnett Recital Hall
Monday, April 10th, 2023
10:00am

FOURTH-YEAR RECITAL*
NATHAN KWOK, CELLO
with Brenda Campbell, *piano*

Sonata for Cello and Piano, no. 3, H. 340
I. Allegro Agitato
II. Andante
III. Allegro ma non presto

Bohuslav Martinů
(1890-1959)

Orbit

Philip Glass
(1937-)

Requiebros

Gaspar Cassadó
(1897-1966)

- INTERMISSION -

Sonata for Cello and Piano in C major, op. 119
I. Andante Grave
II. Moderato
III. Allegro, ma non troppo

Sergei Prokofiev
(1891-1953)

Le Grand Tango

Astor Piazzolla
(1921-1992)

* In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Music degree
with a major in Cello Performance.

*We acknowledge that the University of British Columbia is situated on the
traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam people.*

Martinů Cello Sonata no. 3 (1952)

Born in Polička near the Bohemian-Moravian border, the Czech composer Bohuslav Martinů showed early promise as a violinist and composer, composing his first works at the age of 7. In 1906, the citizens of Polička gathered funds to send Martinů to the Prague Conservatory—however, Martinů soon found himself expelled from the Conservatory due to “incorrigible inattentiveness.”

Following the Nazi occupation of France in 1940, Martinů escaped to the United States, where he completed his 6 Symphonies, various concertos, and chamber music works. Many of these works are based on or feature Czech texts shows, indicating Martinů’s deep connection to his homeland. Indeed, Martinů wished to return to Czechoslovakia; however, the seizure of power by the Czech Communist Party in 1948 delayed his plans.

Martinů’s Cello Sonata no. 3 coincides with the year he obtained American citizenship. Unlike its brooding, anxious predecessors (perhaps reflecting Martinů’s own unrest due to the war), this Sonata features an optimistic, quirky buoyancy in its outer movements, which some performers have felt evoked jazz-like elements. Recalling the vibrant style of Antonín Dvořák and Igor Stravinsky, Martinů writes idiomatically for the cello, never exceeding its technical and physical capabilities.

Philip Glass - *Orbit* (2013)

Philip Glass grew up in Baltimore, Maryland. Though he studied flute as a young child, Glass studied mathematics and philosophy at the University of Chicago before pursuing composition at Juilliard. His early ensemble pieces were characterized by monotonous and repetitive rhythms and brief, melodic fragments, eventually dubbed the term “minimalist music” (though Glass himself preferred to speak of himself as a composer of “music with repetitive structures.”)

Orbit was premiered on April 2, 2013 by Yo-Yo Ma with dancer Li'l Buck. Commissioned by Damian Woetzel—the former principal dancer of the New York City Ballet and current President of the Juilliard School—*Orbit* begins with a quiet melody, evolving in complexity in a serpentine fashion. The piece is composed almost entirely out of repeated eighth notes, perhaps analogous to the elliptical shape and gravitational pull of a planet’s own orbit. Though seemingly simple, there is remarkable gravitas and solemnity embedded within each phrase.

Gaspar Cassadó – *Requiebros* (1934)

Cellist Andrew Smith writes, “It would be hard to imagine putting together a collection of Spanish music for cello without including any works of Gaspar Cassadó...” Born to a musical family and giving his first public performance at the age of nine, Cassadó was destined to be a great musician. The great cellist Pablo Casals offered to take Cassadó on as a student, marking the beginning of a life-long partnership.

This partnership would temporarily be put on hold. Like some of the other composers on this program, war drove them apart from their music and loved ones. The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 led Casals to flee Spain under Fascism. Though Cassadó maintained that he was “apolitical” and continued to perform in Spain, Casals wrote a letter to the *New York Times*, in which he severely reprimanded and cut ties with Cassadó. An amicable reunion was facilitated years later by violinist Yehudi Menuhin.

Requiebros translates roughly to “compliments,” especially flirtatious compliments between lovers. Quintessentially Spanish, the piece begins with a virtuosic piano figure. Like a bull fighter entering the ring, the cello proudly declares its arrival before bursting into Flamenco dance. Expressive markings give an idea of its character: *con fantasia*, *con passione*, *con dolcezza*. The middle section features a shift to e minor, and has an ascending, accented melody. Following a cadenza-like passage, the piece returns to the opening character, ending on a final flourish.

Sergei Prokofiev – Cello Sonata in C major, op. 119 (1949)

In 1936, after nearly 15 years spent living in Paris and traveling worldwide, Sergei Prokofiev, admittedly “patriotic and homesick” and longing to “see the real winter again and hear the Russian language in my ears,” moved back to the Soviet Union. The late 1930s saw very few public débuts of Prokofiev’s works, save the Cello Concerto, Op. 58 (1938), and *Romeo and Juliet* (1936), both met with negative criticism.

In the years following World War II, seeking to recover the Soviet “socialist realism” ideal of art, Andrey Zhdanov, the leading Soviet cultural policy maker, passed a series of resolutions affecting literature, art, film, and music. Much of Prokofiev’s work had been banned from public performance, and though still composing, he hardly was living the pampered lifestyle he had anticipated returning to Russia. Prokofiev’s *Sonata for Cello and Piano*, remarkably, was permitted by the Committee of Artistic Affairs to receive a

public première. It was debuted in 1950 by cellist Mstislav Rostropovich and pianist Sviatoslav Richter, with the first movement bearing the quote, “Mankind—that has a proud sound.”

Despite the sheer horror that besieged Prokofiev at the time of the work’s composition, the work remains remarkably expressive. The first movement, marked *Andante Grave*, opens with a resounding call by the cello, followed by a short call-and-response folk melody between the cello and piano. A throbbing interlude brings the main theme, a cheery and flippant duet. The movement slows as the cello rings out a beautiful harmonic cadence, and the second theme enters much more heavily mechanically than the first.

The scherzo second movement opens with a coy, stop-and-go pattern of childlike little chords in the piano. This leads to more a more rambunctious kind of play between the instruments that creates sparkle and animation by contrasting the extreme registers of each instrument. Faithful to the humorous intentions of the genre (*scherzo* is Italian for “joke”), the outer sections of this 3-part movement create their animated—almost cartoonish—good spirits by means of skippy staccatos in the piano and perky pizzicati in the cello. The central trio, by contrast, while still expansive in the range of tonal space it occupies, is all flowing honey and mellifluous melody, as tradition demands.

The last movement is rondo-ish in structure and features the simplest, clearest textures of the entire sonata. Its opening refrain is shockingly tuneful, spelled out in balanced answering phrases constructed out of breezy wide melodic intervals and even a couple of Scotch snaps—the sort of thing you might cheerfully hum to yourself while washing the family car with a garden hose. The two intervening episodes are miles apart in mood: the first bristles with lively scampering melodies, the second is serene and reflective. Taking his cue from the finales of Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff, Prokofiev brings the sonata to a close with a grandiose *apotheosis*, in which the first movement’s opening bars are recalled in a gloriously broad retelling, accompanied by exhilarating swirls of runs in both instruments.

Program Notes for Prokofiev’s Cello Sonata adapted from David Finckel and Wu Han’s 2015 concert, compiled by Andrew Goldstein in 2013, and Edgar Moreau and Jessica Xylina Osborne’s 2018 recital.

Astor Piazzolla – *Le Grand Tango* (1982)

With over 300 unique tangos composed, Piazzolla’s name has become synonymous with the genre. Born in Argentina to Italian parents, and spending

the majority of his childhood in New York before studying in Paris, Piazzola's compositions certainly reflect his diverse experiences. His mentor, Nadia Boulanger, encouraged him to stick with the tango rather than focusing solely on classical composition. Taking her words to heart, he began to experiment with the standard Argentine tango, diverging from the expected Latin harmonies and producing an edgier sound than that found in classic tango.

Though composed nearly 40 years after Prokofiev's Cello Sonata, *Le Grand Tango* was also written for the cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, who did not play it until 1990 or record it until 1996. Played without pause, this Tango is comprised of three sections: the first, a rhythmically strident, containing several characteristic tango rhythms; the second, a lyrical melody consisting of a simple yet melancholic tune; and the third, a return to the feverish, dance-like insistence.