

Diploma Recital at Barnett Hall

Monday, April 15, 2024

7:30 p.m.

Liam Pistor, Clarinet

Three Pieces for Clarinet Solo

Igor Stravinsky
(1882-1971)

Concerto for Clarinet, Op. 57

Carl Nielsen
(1865-1931)

Eddie Park, piano
Cheng Xin Ip, snare drum

~ INTERMISSION ~

Sholem-alekhem, rov Feidman!

Béla Kovács
(1937-2021)

Fergus Kwan, piano

Sonatina for Clarinet and Piano

Joseph Horowitz
(1926-2022)

- I. Allegro calmato
- II. Lento, quasi andante
- III. Con brio

Eddie Park, piano

Rhapsody for Two by One

Liam Pistor
(b. 1996)

This recital is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Diploma in Music Performance.

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Three Pieces for Clarinet Solo

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)

Igor Stravinsky was a Russian-born conductor and composer, who was a pioneer of twentieth-century neoclassicism and a pivotal figure in modernist music. Born in Russia in 1882, he attained French citizenship in 1934, and American citizenship in 1945. While still in Russia, he studied composition with Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov – a master of orchestration. Soon after, he was commissioned to compose three ballets – *The Firebird* (1910), *Petrushka* (1911), and *The Rite of Spring* (1913) – works which challenged other composers' understanding of rhythmic structure. He was then compelled to shift his focus from ballets to smaller works due to the performance restrictions necessitated by World War I. While he sojourned in Switzerland during the war, he met Werner Reinhart, a philanthropist and amateur clarinetist who financed a series of chamber music concerts and *L'Histoire du soldat* (1918) – a theatrical work which blended Russian folktales with popular music structures, such as the tango, waltz, chorale, and rag. The success of these endeavours then inspired Stravinsky to compose *Three Pieces for Clarinet Solo* (1918) as a thank-you gift to Reinhart.

Three Pieces for Clarinet Solo was premiered and published in 1919, becoming one of the first unaccompanied works for a wind instrument, and a prototype for subsequent solo works. It is a significant composition within Stravinsky's oeuvre because it showcases the transition from his Russian phase, when his works reflected the influence of Russian folklore and style, to his neoclassical phase, when his works concentrated on techniques and themes from the Classical period. Stravinsky once said that the composition was inspired by New Orleans' clarinetist Sidney Bechet's "Characteristic Blues" – a jazzy composition. However, it also shares some Slavic folk music elements, and employs some traditional harmonic and melodic devices.

The first piece is marked *Sempre p e molto tranquillo* – always soft and very calm. It is structured in an A-B-A form, with the B section contrasting with the lyrical A sections through the use of different rhythms. This piece explores the lowest register of the clarinet, sometimes through leaps from the upper to the lower register, before ending with a measure that is "poco più f e poco più mosso" – a little more *forte* and a little more motion – leading into a long fade-out. The second piece is then composed in a freeform style similar to jazz improvisation. Although it is again composed in an A-B-A form, there is no time signature or bar lines. Sextuplets and challenging thirty-second notes in the high register frame a calmer central section filled with eighth notes in the

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lower register. The third piece then once again employs bar lines with frequently shifting meters. Marked “loud from beginning to end,” it employs rapid syncopation, creating a lively rhythm that is stylistically similar to the ragtime and devil’s dance that Stravinsky employed in *L’histoire du soldat*.

Three Pieces for Clarinet Solo challenges the clarinetist to adhere strictly to its paradoxical rhythmic pulse and Stravinsky’s jazzy neoclassicism. It also requires the clarinetist to perform the first two movements on an A clarinet and then switch to a B-flat clarinet for the third – an uncommon requirement when it comes to an unaccompanied clarinet work.

Clarinet Concerto, Op. 57

Carl Nielsen (1865-1931)

Carl Nielsen was a Danish violinist, conductor, and highly regarded twentieth-century composer. He wrote six symphonies, two operas, three concertos, four string quartets, two quintets, solo works for various instruments, incidental and choral music, and multiple songs based on Danish folk traditions. Initially, his composition style reflected Romantic influences, inspired by the works of such composers as Brahms and Grieg. Later, his compositions reflected his shift to neoclassical stylings that became increasingly modern as he blended melodic passages inspired by Danish folk music and classic influences with more complicated elements, including counterpoint and polytonal passages that fused chromatic and dissonant harmony.

In 1921, Nielsen heard the Copenhagen Wind Quintet rehearsing and was impressed by the tonal beauty and musicianship of their performance – so much so, he decided to compose a three-movement quintet expressly for that ensemble. The resulting *Wind Quintet, Op. 43* (1922) ends with a movement that musically depicts the personalities of each quintet member and the characteristics of their respective instruments. Following the successful premier of the composition in 1922, Nielsen decided to compose a concerto for each member of the quintet. However, he was only able to complete two of these concertos before he died in 1931 – one for flute in 1926, and one for clarinet in 1928.

Nielsen’s *Clarinet Concerto, Op. 57* was premiered in Copenhagen by Aage Oxenvad – the clarinetist for whom it was composed. Soon after, a music critic wrote that the performance “liberated the soul of the clarinet, not only the wild animal aspect but also its special brand of ruthless poetry.” Just as Oxenvad had a “somewhat choleric

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temperament,” leading to mood swings, so too the clarinet part in Nielsen’s concerto seems to vacillate between irritability and mildness. Composed in one continuous movement with four main sections, there are times in the concerto when it seems as if the clarinet and other instruments have been pitted against each other in a strife-filled dialogue, creating a sense of conflict between two tonalities – F Major and E Major. Every time the hostilities seem to be ending, a snare drum intervenes, inciting the opponents to renew their conflict. Like Oxenvad, the clarinet is warm at heart but obstinate. Thus, a key component of the concerto is Nielsen’s approach to conflict and, ultimately, its lack of resolution.

Sholem-alekhem, rov Feidman!

Béla Kovács (1937-2021)

Béla Kovács was a respected Hungarian clarinetist who was a master of many genres, from classic repertoire to jazz. A graduate of the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest, he was a Professor of Clarinet at both the Franz Liszt Academy and the University of Music and Dramatic arts in Graz, Austria. He was also principal clarinet with the Hungarian State Opera House Orchestra, as well as the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra for twenty-five years. He performed a broad range of music, including works by Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, Brahms and Ravel, but was hailed by critics and public alike as one of the foremost interpreters of Hungarian clarinet repertoire, particularly the works of Bartók and Dohnányi, as well as the music of his contemporary compatriots. Not only did his superior technique and style set him apart, but also his receptivity to humour.

Although renowned as a clarinetist, Kovács was also a highly esteemed composer of more than sixty works for solo clarinet, clarinet and piano, clarinet chamber ensembles, saxophone and piano, and saxophone quartet, as well as a set of concert etudes for clarinet called “Hommmages” in the styles of a number of different composers. However, the work for which he is probably best known is *Sholem-Alekhem, rov Feidman!* It is a tribute to klezmer – the traditional music of the Ashkenazi Jews of Eastern Europe that evolved over centuries from the melding of Jewish cantorial music and religious songs, Yiddish theatre music, Eastern European folk music, and European musical forms. Since the mid-nineteenth century, klezmer compositions featured a clarinet as the lead melodic instrument.

Kovács’ composition is a salute not only to klezmer, but also to the venerated klezmer

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clarinetist Giora Feidman. Its Hebrew title translates to *Peace be with you, Master Feidman!* – a traditional blessing. Feidman is an Argentine-born Israeli clarinetist whose musical identity is intertwined with the style and cultural tradition of klezmer. Featuring an array of klezmer songs and dances, this piece requires the clarinetist to explore a broad range of emotions via melodies and pseudo-improvisatory styles rooted in the klezmer tradition. It begins with a dramatic flourish and Middle Eastern scales before seamlessly transitioning into a slow lyrical song. The music then broodingly leads into dance rhythms that build to a vigorous pace, ultimately leading to a fiery conclusion. Kovács' *Sholem-Alekhem, rov Feidman!* is a joy both to perform and to hear.

Sonatina for Clarinet and Piano

Joseph Horowitz (1926-2022)

Joseph Horowitz was an Austrian-born British conductor and composer. Born into a Jewish family in Vienna in 1926, Horowitz's family emigrated to England in 1938 to escape from the Nazis. After studying music and modern languages at Oxford, he studied composition at the Royal College of Music and then studied in Paris for an additional year. His musical career then began in 1950 when he became music director of the Bristol Old Vic, a London-based theatre company where he composed, arranged and conducted incidental music for two seasons. During that time, he also served as a conductor of ballet and opera at the Festival of Britain (1951). He was subsequently active as a conductor of ballets and operas, regularly touring Europe and the United States, while also teaching at the Royal College of Music in London as a professor of composition, until shortly before his death.

As a composer, Horowitz worked in a broad range of genres, from opera and ballet to orchestral and chamber music, from wind and brass band to television, radio and film scores. While composing, he also explored a broad range of styles, ultimately developing an individual neoclassical idiom that drew on neo-tonal harmonies, enriched by jazz, Latin American and other popular elements. His lighthearted *Sonatina for Clarinet and Piano* was composed and premiered in 1981. It was just one of several selections that he composed for English clarinetist Gervase de Peyer, who he had met while studying at the Royal College of Music, and Australian pianist Gwenneth Pryor.

Horowitz provided a description of the Sonatina in the score: "The Sonatina is lighthearted and follows a traditional pattern of the three movement division. The first, in classical sonata form, concentrates on the middle register of the clarinet, mainly

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lyrical against a rippling piano background. The second movement is an A-B-A song structure employing some of the lowest notes of the wind instrument in a long cantilena over a slow chordal accompaniment. The finale is a kind of rondo [that] alternates two themes in equal proportions, exploiting the upper register of the clarinet. The harmonic idiom of the whole work is obviously tonal, and, like most recent compositions of Horowitz, the Sonatina is melodically and rhythmically much influenced by jazz and other popular music. It calls for equal virtuosity from both players.”

Rhapsody for Two by One

Liam Pistor (b. 1996)

I am a clarinetist, pianist, vocalist, and sometimes composer. Having studied multiple instruments and voice while growing up, I initially chose to concentrate on piano at university while continuing clarinet studies as a secondary instrument and playing clarinet with the Greater Victoria Youth Orchestra, the UVic Symphony Orchestra, and the Western University Symphony Orchestra. Thus far, I have completed a Bachelor of Music with Distinction in Keyboard Performance at the University of Victoria (2019), and a Master of Music in Piano Literature and Performance at the University of Western Ontario (2021). This April, I will finish a Diploma in Clarinet Performance at the University of British Columbia (2024). Along the way, I have been awarded sixteen UVic scholarships, a Western University fellowship and a scholarship for having “the most outstanding record of performance and academic work” of a student entering the MMus program, a Canada Graduate Scholarship (SSHRC), as well as two UBC music scholarships. I have also won numerous awards and bursaries in local and provincial music festivals, an RCM gold medal in voice, and the Greater Victoria Youth Orchestra’s scholarship award for outstanding instrumentalist (any instrument).

My original composition *Rhapsody for Two by One* is a musical rendering of the ongoing tug-of-war between the musical influences at play in both my music studies and performances. I composed the piece in four sections. It begins slowly but dramatically before calming down and growing bittersweet. It then transitions to a more upbeat, grand but quirky, second section before slowing in the third to a rhythm and melody inspired by contemporary music. Then, finally, the fourth section recalls the second section and transitions into a cadenza before ending with a bang. Ideally, the piece should come as a surprise to the audience.

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