Adrián Sandí, clarinet
Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts
From the studio of Kenneth Grant

with
Helen Hou, piano

Sunday, November 22, 2009
7:00 p.m.
Kilbourn Hall
PROGRAM NOTES

Carlos Guastavino – Sonata for Clarinet and Piano

Carlos Guastavino (1912-2000) was one of the most popular Argentinean composers of the century, though he is overshadowed by the worldwide reputation and impact of Alberto Ginastera. Better known for his piano works, chamber music and songs (over 150), Guastavino was strongly opposed to the contemporary musical trends and compositional scene of his time. His music embraced the romantic traditions, never departing from tonal harmony and traditional forms. His music possesses a delicate nationalistic sentiment, at times nostalgic and at times joyful.

His Sonata for clarinet and piano, written in 1970, is a work of vitality and nostalgia. The abundant memorable melodies that flow incessantly between the clarinet and piano resonate passionately over rich and complex harmonies. The brilliantly flourished passages are of exquisite contrast to the tender and melancholic lines, which at times give the piece a sense of abandonment. The flavor produced by his nationalistic tunes and dance rhythms contribute to the exciting effect of this work.

Pierre Gabaye – Sonatine for Clarinet and Piano

Pierre Gabaye (1930-2000) started his musical training on piano and went on to become an accomplished composer and pianist in both the classical and jazz idioms. His music can be compared stylistically to Francis Poulenc and Camille Saint-Saëns, with its light-hearted but highly energetic melodies. Gabaye is largely under-performed and recognized today; his legacy does not even merit an entry in the New Grove.

The first movement of the Sonatine begins with plenty of energy in both parts and shortly thereafter changes to a constant shift between singing slower lines and sudden agitated melodies. The second movement has a clear jazz influence in its expressive material. Long seamless lines on the clarinet are supported by an elaborate piano accompaniment. The third movement is driven by the constant moving notes in the piano part. The clarinet introduces small sections of melodic material, only to be taken once again by the piano. There is a constant change between humorous and bouncy ideas that contrast with slow yet playful characters.

Steve Reich – New York Counterpoint

When I first heard New York Counterpoint about 6 years ago, I became fascinated with the idea and challenge of performing this work. Over the past summer, I finally decided to dive into this project but had little idea of how much work it was going to be. NY Counterpoint requires the soloist to pre-record 8 B-flat clarinet and 2 bass clarinet parts and then play a final solo part live against the tape. In order to prepare for the recording, the performer must learn all 11 parts and come up with a recording plan. I learned that the previous recordings were done with very different recording technologies and the process itself differed from one performer to another. In order to accomplish the highest precision and consistency between all 10 underlying parts, we decided to record small patterns and loop them as many times as were required, often in a shifting and complex manner. I must thank Robert Blackburn of Blackdog Recording Studios for his expertise and patience during long hours of hard work.

From the composer:

New York Counterpoint was commissioned by The Fromm Music Foundation for clarinetist Richard Stoltzman. It was composed during the summer of 1985. […] The piece is a continuation of the ideas found in Vermont Counterpoint (1982), where a
soloist plays against a pre-recorded tape of him or her self. [...] The compositional procedure includes … the use of interlocking repeated melodic patterns played by multiples of the same instrument. [...] New York Counterpoint is in three movements: fast, slow, fast, played one after the other without pause. The change of tempo is abrupt and in the simple relation of 1:2. The piece is in the meter 3/2 = 6/4 (=12/8). As is often the case when I write in this meter, there is an ambiguity between whether one hears measures of 3 groups of 4 eight notes, or 4 groups of 3 eight notes. In the last movement of New York Counterpoint the bass clarinets function to accent first one and then the other of these possibilities while the upper clarinets essentially do not change. The effect, by change of accent, is to vary the perception of that which in fact is not changing.

Alexander Scriabin – Preludes

Alexander Scriabin (1871-1915) was a Russian composer and pianist, known mostly for his piano works and the “mystic” or “Prometheus” chord. His music evolved from a Chopinesque lyrical style to one of mysticism-shrouded atonality that foreshadowed 12-tone and serial composition. He also claimed to be a synesthete, associating the circle of fifths with a color spectrum. His orchestral tone poem Prometheus even includes a part for a color organ – a keyboard instrument that would project light rather than sound. As the great pianist Vladimir Horowitz said, “Scriabin is super-Romantic, super-sensuous, super-everything.”

The six preludes performed tonight are a selection from seven piano preludes chosen from opuses 11, 15, and 16 by Willard Elliot, former principal bassoonist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, to transcribe for clarinet and piano. He arranged the works for Larry Combs, former principal clarinet of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. These preludes represent the earlier lyric style of Scriabin and, in fact, the form factor can also be directly attributed to Chopin’s influence. Each is very brief and encompasses a single “sensation”, Scriabin’s favorite word.

Jean Françaix – Tema con variazioni

Jean Françaix (1912-1997) was a prolific French composer and pianist who took pride in claiming a position among neo-classical composers. His music is resolutely tonal yet with his own freely-expressed harmonic language. The Tema con variazioni, written in 1974, is constructed of a simple motif which develops and exploits the principle of variation to its fullest. The work indulges in jocular dialogues, brief phrases flourished with different stresses and effects, different highly contrasting characters and great rhythmic variety. Françaix’s music has an indisputable sense of humor. In writing his wind quintet, he aimed was “to do something that can be called ‘Français’, with both an S and an X, that is, to be jolly most of the time – even comical… to avoid the premeditated wrong note and boredom like the plague.”

From the composer:
Originally written under the name of my grand son Olivier - who is now over six feet tall - my Variations for clarinet, chosen as a competition piece by the Paris Music Academy, are, according to the laws of the genre, perilous to perform. Fortunately, clarinet players have masochistic tendencies; they are always asking for pipe music of the spheres. We are far from the time when Jerome K. Jerome, listening to a clarinet, was writing that it reminded him of his mother-in-law swallowed by a shark. Nowadays clarinet players have turned into [sirens]; and Odysseus' bonds should be of steel.
PROGRAM

Sonata (1970) Carlos Guastavino
1. Allegro deciso (1912-2000)
2. Andante 16’
3. Rondo. Allegro spiritoso

Sonatine (1959) Pierre Gabaye
1. Allegro (1930-2000)
2. Largo 15’
3. Prestissimo

INTERMISSION

New York Counterpoint (1985) Steve Reich
1. Fast (b. 1936)
2. Slow 12’
3. Fast

Recorded at Blackdog Studios
Robert Blackburn, recording engineer
Adrián Sandi and Helen Hou, producers

Preludes Alexander Scriabin
1. Vivo (Op. 11 no. 23) (1871-1915)
2. Lento (Op. 16 no. 4) arr. Willard Elliot
3. Andante cantabile (Op. 16 no. 3) 8’
4. Allegretto (Op. 16 no. 5)
5. Allegro (Op. 16 no. 2)
6. Vivo (Op. 15 no. 2)

Tema con variazioni (1974) Jean Françaix
Tema. Largo – Moderato (1912-1997)
Variation 1. Larghetto misterioso 8’
Variation 2. Presto
Variation 3. Moderato
Variation 4. Adagio
Variation 5. Tempo di Valzer
Cadenza
Variation 6. Prestissimo