

Stephen Lewis, piano

3 PM, Sunday May 19th, 2013

CPMC Concert Hall

Sonatina (1919)

Béla Bartók
(1881-1945)

- I. Dudások (Bagpipers)
- II. Medvetánc (Bear Dance)
- III. Finale

imAge/piano (2004)

Roger Reynolds
(1934-)

Images, Book I (1903)

Claude Debussy
(1862-1918)

- Reflets dans l'eau
- Hommage à Rameau
- Mouvement

- 10 minute intermission -

Suite, Op. 25 (1925)

Arnold Schoenberg
(1874-1953)

- Prelude
- Gavotte-Musette-Gavotte
- Intermezzo
- Minuet
- Gigue

Sonata (1926)

Bartók

- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Sostenuto e pesante
- III. Allegro molto

Program Notes

Béla Bartók composed his **Sonatina (1919)** at the same time as he was working on the pantomime *The Miraculous Mandarin*. The opening of the lurid and violent *Mandarin* evokes the frenzy of modern-day city traffic, full of speeding cars and trucks. Bartók was disturbed by the advancement of technologies like the automobile, finding such realities of 20th-century living dangerous (being born in 1881, Bartók witnessed the proliferation of automobiles firsthand). The *Sonatina* recalls an earlier era in Eastern European culture, when the bagpipe and violin were among the most advanced instruments commonly available. The encroachment of technological modernity was one of Bartók's reasons for traveling around Eastern Europe with fellow Hungarian composer Zoltán Kodály to collect and catalogue folk music: they both feared that modern musical broadcast and reproduction would threaten the future of oral folk music traditions. The music they documented became an important influence for Bartók, who based the *Sonatina* on five folk tunes he collected from Transylvania. Two of these themes appear in the first movement, "Bagpipers," with the piano's left-hand imitating the drones of Romanian bagpipes. The third theme, which Bartók described as being played "on the G and D strings of a violin," appears in the "Bear Dance." The two remaining tunes, also originally for the violin, are the basis of the final movement.

In **Roger Reynolds' *imAge/piano* (2004)**, the "A" stands for "articulate." *imAge/piano* is uncharacteristically brief for Reynolds, consisting of minute yet meaningful developments of a series of complex, asymmetrical pitch collections. The work divides into halves, with the pitch collections of the first half repeated as finely chiseled arpeggiations and decays. These decays, which themselves are arpeggiated, are an especially interesting feature of *imAge/piano*, with Reynolds specifying the order of pitch release. A series of short refrains recurs throughout.

Claude Debussy's *Images, book I* (1903) serves as the heart of this program. These three character pieces—*Reflets dans l'eau*, *Hommage à Rameau*, and *Mouvement*—take pianistic developments of Chopin and Liszt to a new level of refinement, requiring an attention resonance that would influence much of the other music on this program. Bartók and Schoenberg were both affected by Debussy's advances in harmony (Bartók's debt to the latter is well-known; Schoenberg's appears in the use of whole-tone scales, octatonic scales, and quartal harmonies in his tonal and freely atonal music). In and of themselves, the three pieces in *Images* represent different eras of human history: *Reflet dans l'eau*, the natural time before modern science; *Hommage à Rameau*, that of pre-industrial human knowledge; and *Mouvement*, the age of industry with its incessant repetitive processes. Debussy imbues the natural past with beauty, the human past with wisdom and gravitas, and the industrial present with optimism and energy.

Arnold Schoenberg's *Suite, Op. 25* (1925) is one of his earliest fully twelve-tone compositions. Its use of the Baroque dance suite as a formal model raised

eyebrows among his peers at the time, as it suggested a Neo-classical bent. The Suite skips capriciously from one mood, one reference, one expressionistic reaction to the next. The "Prelude" has a surfeit of ideas (all based on the tone row) that simply cannot wait their turn—and so they pile up until the music is forced to stop and regroup. The "Gavotte" and "Musette" are linked, with the former's stately dance beat barely containing its intricate details, while the latter's G-D-flat "drone" allows such detail free rein to be as hyperbolic and phantasmagorical as it likes. Phantasmagory also suits the "Intermezzo," (a title deliberately anachronistic in its reference to Schumann and Brahms) which attempts lush Romanticism but instead evokes a psychosis reminiscent of *Pierrot Lunaire*, each note dripping in blood. This movement is similar to Bartòk's night music style, with the accompaniment pattern's evocation of the sounds of nocturnal insects. The "Menuet" is relatively stable, with the reassuring 3/4 meter prevalent *almost* throughout; its "Trio" features an obstinate, mechanical canon. Returning to the manic energy of the "Prelude" and "Musette," the final "Gigue" is a fine demonstration of Schoenberg's ability to compose exciting music in complex meters. It stands as a complicated, inexplicable machine constantly in danger of shaking itself to pieces.

Bartòk's Sonata (1926) was composed along with his First Piano Concerto and his *Out of Doors* Suite as showpieces for touring as a concert pianist. At the same time, the three works mark the first complete synthesis of Bartòk's musical style from his various influences. The themes of all three movements of the Sonata obsess over repeated notes and the permeable boundary between accompaniment, ostinato, and melody. The first movement recalls his earlier *Allegro Barbaro* in character, while also invoking Stravinsky's *Les noces* and the first two pieces from Debussy's *Images*. The second is a dirge, with heavy repeated notes played over a dissonant bagpipe-inspired drone. Concluding the work is a dance-like showpiece that features Bartòk's use of the piano as a percussion instrument.

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