

PROGRAM NOTES

Kathryn Lucktenberg, violin • Tuesday, Nov. 19 • 8 p.m., Beall Hall

Sonata VI in C Minor from *Sonatae, Violino Solo, 1681*

Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber

Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber was one of the most renowned composers and virtuoso violinists of his time. His music is known for technical and musical difficulties that stretched the instrument and instrumentalist beyond traditional seventeenth and eighteenth-century repertoire, and offer challenges to the performer to this day. In this sonata, the sixth of the eight *Sonatae, Violino Solo*, Biber shows off his command of the instrument with his typical flashy passage work, double stops and unusual harmony twists. Atypical in the C Minor Sonata is the re-tuning of the violin in the middle of the work to scordatura tuning, from the traditional E A D G tuning to D A D G.

The work begins with a toccata-like introduction rich with ascending chromatics. Fugal entries traded between continuo players and solo violin establish the texture each instrument brings to the work. The majestic *passacaglia* is dominated by contrasts: forte sections against piano sections; double stop variations set off by disjunct, single-line material; exploding linear passages interrupted by noble columns of chords.

A bariolage passage at the start of the third movement immediately plays up the new harmonic dimensions created by the unusual tuning. Not only are different chordal combinations possible, the instrument responds and opens to the relaxed string tension, and resonates hauntingly with the sympathetic ring that two D string gives us. This introduction-fantasia leaves the listener utterly unprepared for the fiery *Gavotte* that follows. The concluding *Adagio* draws a dramatic connection to the first introduction with the use of descending chromatics, bringing the work full circle.

In the dedication to the *Sonatae, Violino Solo*, Biber reveals his feelings about the capacity of the violin. Making a play on the word “solo,” he writes:

“The sun [sol] has greater virtue because it is alone [sol]... I have collected on one stringed instrument *tonos* and *sonos*, that they might resound in obsequy to you [the Archbishop of Salzburg]... I will not violate, by this violin, the full chorus which I promise you; nor do I think it is of less value if I have not observed the arithmetic order well enough, where, in order that it may be stronger, one thing [the solo violin] is accustomed to be passed over with several numbers [multi-stops], for there is in my very solo a number which can delight by its variety.”

—Kathryn Lucktenberg

Suite from *The Trials of Katharina Kapler*

Tom Manoff

This suite was written for Kathryn Lucktenberg and Katharina Kepler.

Although this music describes dramatic scenes, much of it is based precisely in counting through rhythm. The “Burning Music” counts fives, for example, while “How Seven Becomes Twelve” counts these two sky-based numbers. Such “Sacred Counting” is a central element in the opera’s deep structure. People interested in the Fasnet Celebration—the mythic background to the opera—can go to <http://www.schlehengeister.com/> to get some flavor if it. This ritual—thousands of years old—is still a major celebration in Weil der Stadt, the city where Kepler was born and the place where the opera takes place.

The “Trials of Katharina Kepler” is a work in progress by Manoff reflecting his long interest in the relationship between music and myth. Living for some years in Stuttgart, a half hour from Weil der Stadt (where many of these events took place), Manoff became involved with the story more directly. He hopes that through this music people will become more interested in Katharina’s life.

Manoff studied composition at the Manhattan School of Music and later taught composition in its preparatory division. The author of several college texts on music, he has been the classical music critic of National Public Radio’s “All Things Considered” since 1986.

—Tom Manoff

Quatuor pour la Fin du Temps Olivier Messiaen

Messiaen's *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps* is a monument to the twentieth-century literature. It is a testament of the human spirit's ability to survive and ultimately transcend humanity's most destructive side. In 1940 Messiaen was serving in a menial capacity for the French medical corps. He was captured by the Germans and incarcerated in a prisoner of war camp called Stalag VIII A, at Görlitz, a small town in Silesia about 55 miles east of Dresden. He speaks movingly of the suffering of his fellow inmates, but also that of the German soldiers (imagine!). The only instruments and musicians he had available were violin, cello and clarinet. The piano part he wrote in his head; an upright ("badly out of tune, and with some keys sinking down periodically") was procured for the première, Jan 15, 1941. The Germans provided him with manuscript paper and allowed him and his colleagues to rehearse every evening. There are accounts of soldiers listening respectfully outside their rehearsal space. The Quatuor was premiered in freezing weather for five thousand people: a complete cross-section of humanity—peasants, workers, intellectuals, clergy, soldiers. Messiaen wrote later that never had his work been better received or understood.

Messiaen was a devout Catholic, a deeply spiritual person. The inspiration for this work is taken from the Bible in Revelations Chapter Ten: "I saw an angel full of strength, descending from the sky, clad with a cloud, covered with a rainbow. His face was like the sun, his feet like columns of fire. He set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the earth, and, standing on the sea and on the earth, he lifted his hand to the sky and swore by Him who lives in the centuries of centuries, saying: "There shall be no more time; but on the day of the seventh Angel's trumpet, the mystery of God shall be accomplished." In his own words, Messiaen's comments:

"This quartet contains eight movements. Why? Seven is the perfect number, the creation of six days sanctified by the divine Sabbath; the seventh, of rest, extends into eternity and becomes the eighth of unflinching light and unalterable peace."

1. *Liturgy of Crystal*. Between three and four in the morning, the awakening of birds: a solo blackbird improvises, surrounded by a shimmer of sound, by a halo of trills lost very high in the trees. Transpose this onto the religious plane and you have the harmonious silence of Heaven.
2. *Vocalise for the Angel who announces the end of Time*. The first and third sections (very short) evoke the power of the mighty Angel, crowned with a rainbow and clothed by a cloud, who sets one foot upon the sea and one foot upon the earth. In the middle section—these are the impalpable harmonies of heaven. On the piano, soft cascades of blue-orange chords, garlanding with their distant chime the quasi-plain-song chant of the violin and cello.
3. *Abyss of the birds*. Clarinet solo. The abyss is time, with its sorrows and weariness. The birds are the opposite of Time; they are our desire for light, for stars, for rainbows and joyful songs!
4. *Interlude*. [Without piano, the shortest and the first to have been written]. A Scherzo, lighter and more extrovert than the others, but linked to them nonetheless by melodic reminiscences.
5. *Praise to the Eternity of Jesus*. Cello and piano. Jesus is here considered as the Word. A long phrase for the cello, infinitely slow, magnifies with love and reverence the eternity of this powerful and gentle Word 'which the years can never efface.' Majestically, the melody unfolds in a kind of tender and supreme distance. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was in God, and the Word was God.'
6. *Dance of fury, for the seven trumpets*. Rhythmically the most characteristic piece of the set. The four instruments in unison are made to sound like gongs and trumpets (the first six trumpets of the apocalypse followed by various catastrophes, the trumpet of the Seventh Angel announcing the consummation of the mystery of God). Music of stone, fearful granite sonorities; the irresistible movement of steel, enormous blocks of purple fury, of icy intoxication. Listen above all to the terrible fortissimo of the theme in augmentation and the changes in register of its different notes, towards the end of the piece.
7. *Jumble of rainbows for the Angel who announces the end of Time*. This brings back some passages from the second movement. The mighty Angel appears, and above all the rainbow that crowns him (the rainbow: a symbol of peace, wisdom, and of all luminous and tonal vibrations). In my dreams I hear recognized chords and melodies, I see known colors and forms; then, after this transitory stage, I pass beyond reality and submit with ecstasy to dizziness, a gyratory interlocking of superhuman sounds and colors. These swords of fire, these flows of blur-orange lava, these sudden stars; this is the tumult of rainbows!
8. *Praise to the immortality of Jesus*. A long violin solo, the counterpart to the cello solo of the fifth movement. Why this second eulogy? It is addressed more specifically to the second aspect of Jesus—the man Jesus—to the Word made flesh, resurrected immortally to grant us life. It is all love. Its slow ascent towards the extreme high register is the ascent of man towards his God, of the Child towards his Father, of the deified Being towards Paradise."

—Kathryn Lucktenberg