

ABOUT

SONATA FOR FLUTE AND PIANO

The sonata is in the classical mold of three movements, Allegro energico, Andante tranquillo, and Presto volante. The first movement is cast in a traditional sonata form, where the interval collections of the first eight measures represent the “home ground,” and those in measures 17-30 a slightly different sound world. These are treated to a series of interactions and transformations, so that the “development” emerges imperceptibly from them. The recapitulation, starting at measure 146, brings these two collections back to their original separation, but not to the same pitches, partly because the interval collections of the exposition are vertically inverted in the recapitulation. Virtually all of the writing in this movement is linear.

My models for the second movement are the nocturnes of Chopin, mixed with the “insect noises” one finds in the “night music” pieces of Bartók. It is meant to be a slow, quiet meditation, where the melodic shapes evolve slowly throughout the movement, and return to their shapes near the end. The B section includes an ad libitum part for off-stage clarinet.

The last movement is a simple Rondo, A-B-A-C-A, built primarily of the same interval combinations that govern the first movement. The C section, however, is my own homage to a movement I regard as the most magnificent finale of any of the romantic sonatas, the parallel-octave scurrying at the end of Chopin’s second piano sonata, hence for the entire C section the piano and the flute are in unison or in octaves. This section includes some near quotations of motivic material from the first movement.

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Season 112, Program 107



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND DANCE

GUEST ARTIST

**Alejandro
Planchart**

composer

Collier House
Monday, June 3, 2012 7 p.m.



Sonata for Solo Violin (1985–87)*Appassionato*

L. Holland Phillips, violin

Fantasia for Bassoon (2006)*Moderato e flessibile**Presto volante**Tranquillo e flessibile**Allegro energico**Moderato e flessibile*

Helena Kopchick Spencer, bassoon

Sonata for Flute and Piano (2003)*Allegro energico**Andante tranquillo**Presto volante*

Sarah Pyle, flute

Matthew Pavilanis, piano

with Bradley Frizzell, offstage clarinet

Alejandro Enrique Planchart is Emeritus Professor of Music at the University of California. He was born in Caracas in 1935 and pursued studies in piano, philosophy, and literature in his native city. Later he studied composition, piano, and harpsichord at Yale University (B.Mus. 1958, M.Mus. 1960). After four years working as a composer, conductor, and arranger in New York and New Haven, he entered Harvard to study music history (Ph.D. 1971) while continuing his work as a composer and conductor. In 1963 he founded an early music ensemble, Cappella Cordina. This ensemble became the de facto collegium musicum at Yale for about twelve years and later one of the ensembles of the collegium musicum at UCSB, which remained in operation until 2002. He taught music theory and history at Yale (1967-75) and the University of Victoria (1975-76). He was visiting professor at Brandeis (1982-83) and Harvard (1989-90). From 1976 to his retirement in 2002 he was in the faculty at UC Santa Barbara, where he taught music history (middle ages, classical era, 20th century), and occasionally counterpoint and composition in

exposition. They become “unmoored” in the development, and only partially return to their ranges in the recapitulation.

The second movement is built of melodic gestures that turn upon themselves, alternating with arpeggiations of different intervals. The development, however, is an extended fugue on a theme that combines a fifth with something of the “twisting figure” that opens the movement. The recapitulation returns to a variation of the opening material and closes with a massive statement of the fugue subject. Tonight we will hear only the first movement, as originally premiered by Claudia Combs.

FANTASIA FOR BASSOON

In 1958 I wrote a short piece for unaccompanied bassoon for Richard Lottridge’s masters recital at Yale, it was about three minutes. I lost the music during one of my many moves, but in 2004 or 2005 a former student then living in Hawaii found a copy among her papers and sent me a copy. I was happy with the opening section of the piece and the start of the second, but very little else. In 2006 one of the best students I had at UCSB, who had graduated and gone to Northwestern to do a D.M.A. wrote about her recital at the end of the following year, and I decided to write a piece for her. She seemed unsure about her accompanist so I decided to do a work for solo bassoon. I reused some of the music of the older work with considerable revisions as most of section 1 and the start of section 4 of the new piece, which was designed to showcase my student’s formidable virtuosity, of which I had ample experience. The entire piece is an arch form, not unlike that of my *Sesquialtera* for piano (1960). Sections 1 and 5 are both tonal and serial, in that the note series I use is a diatonic collection, with interval cells being recombined to produce motives and themes. The same procedures, this time applied to the total chromatic spectrum, are employed in the inner movements, the goal is to produce an almost improvisatory kind of music, in some ways like the long narrative poems that are improvised by Venezuelan “cantadores” in tales that veer from romance to violence, or melancholy and back with dizzying shifts.

In the case of my student, between the time I wrote the piece and now a divorce, a second very happy marriage, two children and shift away from the concert stage to a career as youth orchestra director of one of North Carolina’s most important Lutheran churches (the largest Lutheran parish in the entire Eastern seaboard) have intervened. So tonight is the first performance of the work.

the music department and Latin paleography in the history department. In addition he conducted the combined collegia at UC Santa Barbara, which included a medieval ensemble, a motet choir, and a Baroque and Classical orchestra, which gave a combined total of six or seven different programs each year covering a repertory that went from pre-Gregorian chant to the music of Haydn and Mozart. He was also an occasional performer and conductor in concerts of the Ensemble for Contemporary Music. He has lectured widely in the United States, Europe, and Latin America and published over a hundred works including symphonies, songs, solo and chamber music, articles and books on Latin plainsong, the music of Guillaume Du Fay and other Renaissance topics, as well as Latin American music and aspects of 20th century music. With the Cappella Cordina he issued a pioneering series of recordings of medieval and Renaissance music. He received a Morse Faculty Fellowship from Yale University in 1973 and was a Guggenheim fellow in 1987-88. His book *The Repertory of Tropes at Winchester* won the Gustave Arlt award in the Humanities from the Council of Graduate Schools in the United States in 1979. In 2006 he received the Howard M. Brown Award from Early Music America for lifetime contribution to the field of early music, and in 2009 he received the Arion Prize from the Cambridge Society for Early Music for his work on Guillaume Du Fay.

PROGRAM NOTES BY THE COMPOSER

I have always written two kinds of music, which in the simplest terms can be described as basically tonal and atonal, although this last definition is inaccurate to me in that I always hear a note or a collection of notes as the “center of gravity” of anything I write. For the most part most of my larger works are “atonal,” but a good number of smaller works are “tonal.”

Although I have actively performed and studied music from the earliest chant to that of the modernist avant-garde of the late 20th century, and love a great deal of it, for my own composing there have been almost from the beginning three pairs of composers who always have something to do with the way I write music: Du Fay and Ockeghem for the way the spin lines together and create a kind of “steady state” music which I find infinitely inventive. Debussy and early Webern for the sheer beauty of the sound they produce. Haydn and Bartók for the way they “think” in sound and never waste a note and never overwrite.

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sounded very different from his music. Shortly afterwards I also wrote some tonal works based on what I then heard as chords with multiple roots, not quite the “polytonality” of composers like Milhaud (whose music I like a great deal), but an “extended tonality” where, at its simplest, the “tonic area,” for example, consisted of combination of the traditional I, IV, and V triads, or else of multiple triads built on the root plus the third or the fifth of the “mother triad.” The resulting sound world, which could go from very simple consonance to a great deal of dissonance, bears a distant relationship to the music of Stravinsky in the late 40s and early 50s, without the octatonic aspects, which always sound as “wrong notes” to me in his music. The “atonal” works went from strict twelve-tone procedures on to total serialism, and then to a freely chromatic language built of specific collections of intervals devised for each work, and the tonal works went from using a harmonic language of “polyfunctional” chords, to a diatonic/chromatic language built around collections of intervals devised more or less ad hoc for each piece. In other words, both surfaces have evolved as different “skins” of a very similar way of writing music, a way that is guided primarily by linear counterpoint constrained by a deliberately limited vocabulary of vertical sonorities for each work, something close to what I think is the way Du Fay and Ockeghem did it.

I wrote very little between 1970 and 1985. I write always for specific performers, and during my last five years at Yale there was a marked decline there in any interest for new music, and the same can be said for the situation in Santa Barbara between 1976 and the mid-1980s, when Joan Smith, Jeremy Haladyna, and Carolyn Bremer, established a functioning ensemble for new music that continues to this day. From 1985 on I resumed writing music, though not as steadily as I would prefer.

SONATA FOR SOLO VIOLIN

The piece was written at first as two different pieces, a year apart from each other for my friend Claudia Combs, who premiered the first movement in 1985. By the time the second movement was written Claudia had switched to Baroque violin. The complete sonata was performed by Ronald Copes in 1987.

Each movement is an extended sonata form, each based on a collection of intervals anchored by the open strings of the violin, which represent that way the “home sonority” of the piece. The thematic material in the first movement consists of a series of rhapsodic gestures, anchored in the exposition by “frozen pitches,” in that each pitch class is heard mostly at the same octave throughout the

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