

Finale Charity Concert

23rd Nov 2008 (Sun) 19:00

E. Parish-Alvars Romance in A-flat Major Ann Yeung (USA)
S. McDonald / L. Wood From 'Haiku for Harp' (1985)

I. A stray cat/Asleep on the roof/In the spring rain. (Taigi)
II. A flash of lightning!/The sound of dew/Dripping down the bamboo. (Buson)
III.The old pond/A frog jumps in/The sound of water. (Sodo)
IV.Sweeping the garden/The snow is forgotten/By the broom. (Basho)

Elias Parish-Alvars was known as the “Liszt of the harp” (Hector Berlioz, Memoires). He was an unparalleled virtuoso and composer for the harp who travelled throughout Europe, and to Russia and Constantinople in his brief lifetime. He elevated the status of the harp as a solo and orchestral instrument in the eyes of his famous peers such as Franz Liszt and Hector Berlioz. Parish Alvars expanded the harp’s musical vocabulary and visibility, and major harp schools developed throughout the world because of the efforts of his students. The Romance in A-flat major is a short character piece, typical of its time period.

Composed in 1985 by Susann McDonald, Distinguished Professor of Harp at Indiana University and Artistic Director of the World Harp Congress, and Linda Wood Rollo, founding Editor of the World Harp Congress Review, Vice-President of the World Harp Congress, and former Director of the renowned Indiana University Pre-College Program, Haiku for Harp is a collection of short pieces inspired by actual haiku from Japan to introduce both performers and audiences to some of the non-traditional effects and sounds of the harp. Haiku in an ancient form of Japanese poetry, known for its power of description and brevity. Comprised of three lines of poetry that have only seventeen syllables (5-7-5), haiku often allude to scenes of nature.

(Translations by R.H. Blyth)

G. F. Handel Concerto in B-Flat, Op. 4. No.6, for Harp and Orchestra Teresa Suen (Hong Kong)

I. *Andante-allegro*

George Friederic Handel's Organ Concerto, Op.4, No.6 in B-Flat, designated for 'harpa o organo', is also known as the Handel Harp Concerto. According to a renowned musicologist Sir John Hawkins, it was composed for a famous virtuoso Welsh harpist, William Powell, to play during the first performance of the Oratorio Alexander's Feast at Convent Garden in London in 1736.

Few composers took an interest in the timbre and capacities of the harp during the Baroque period probably due to dominance of the harpsichord. However, with his exceptional ear for colour, Handel understood the harp’s various possibilities and thus included it in some of his operas. The harp concerto, similar to No.5 in the same series, is lighter in mood than the previous concertos. Nevertheless, unlike No.5, it requires a pair of flutes or recorders rather than oboes to complement the strings. These consist of first and second violins, cellos and double basses.

The concerto is set in three movements, following closely the emerging modern concerto fast-slow-fast pattern back then. Similar to many organ concertos, the orchestra is fully subordinate to the soloist in Op. 4, No. 6. For example, in the first movement, 46 of the 66 measures are written exclusively for the harp. The tutti appears only four times (without counting the repeats) at the beginning and closing of the movement, and to provide strength to two major internal cadences. However, unlike the other organ concertos, which were performed by Handel who was a skillful keyboard player himself, the harp concerto features less virtuosic flair of the player. For instance, there is a frequent use of alberti bass figures in the solo part, which is a rather idiomatic composition technique for the harpsichord at that time.

A. Piazzolla History of Tango Amy Tam, Harp (*Hong Kong*) Si-bei Weng, Flute (*Hong Kong*)

I. Café 1930

II. Bordel 1990

Astor Piazzolla was born of Italian parentage in Mar del Plata in Argentina in 1921. In 1925, the family moved to New York, USA to take advantage of the economic benefits derived from capitalism. Astor hung out more on the streets of New York than at school and so his first musical training was the music of Duke Ellington and Cab Calloway at the door of the Cotton Club, a Jazz club. On his 9th birthday, he received a bandoneon, a button accordion and it is at this time he received his first classical musical training. In 1937, the family returned to Argentina. Astor moved to Buenos Aires and studied piano with Alberto Ginastera. The turning point came when he traveled to Paris to study under the famous Nadia Boulanger. She showed him that his identity was not in intellectual music but in tango, spiced with a touch of classical and Jazz, and moulded by his own intuitive sense.

Continental Café 1930 represents another stage in the evolution of the tango. The people have stopped dancing and are now using their ears to listen. It is much more musical and romantic and the transformation shows an slow opening statement with much more harmonies.

Bordello 1900 is a tango which originated from Buenos Aires in 1882. It was first played on guitar and flute. It is full of grace and liveliness and paints a picture of a good natured chatter between French, Italian and Spanish women

D. Balakrishnan Skylife I-Sis, *Trio* (Singapore)
C. Gardel Por Una Cabeza Katryna Tan, Harp
Arr. By C. Yan & K. Tan Getting to Know Music Cindy Yan, Violin Natasha Liu, Cello

Skylife – Balakrishnan (transcribed by Michael Duff)

Por Una Cabeza

Por Una Cabeza is a popular tango song composed in 1935 by Carlos Gardel. It evokes the unforgettable moment of tenderness in the famous movie “Scent of the woman”. Carlos Gardel was regarded as one of the masters of argentine tango music which brought out the essence of the traditional tango music and tango “feel” which inspired many tango dancers.

Getting to Know Music

This is a original compilation piece called “Getting to know music” in 8 Minutes which takes the audience on a frantic music history tour from classical to rock to oriental songs. I-Sis trio use their unique sounds to present this music which transports the audience to different genres of familiar music.

A. R. Ortiz Venezolana Taiwan Harp Soloists Ensemble
B. Andres Parvis Shu Hsin Chen
G. Gershwin Two Preludes Shannon Chieh
Taiwanese Folk Song Mountains in the Spring Time 滿山春色 Meng Lu Chiu
A. Piazzolla Libertango Fan Fen Tai

Venezolana

Alfredo Rolando Ortiz's Venezolana for Five Pedal Harps, was commissioned by Dominique Piana, Harp Professor of Redland University, for the Inland Empire Harp Ensemble. It was premiered at the 1992 American Harp Society. This piece has the character of the traditional Latin American music style, Tonada, which means Spanish melody. In Chile and Argentina, Tonada is a love song. The melodies are usually in parallel 3rds, often modulating to the dominant .

The composer wrote: "The ostinatos, repetitive patterns and syncopations, are typical of the 'tonada,' a popular harp music genre from the plains of Venezuela. Using the pedals for unique sonorities and one modulation [to the dominant], I tried to preserve the feeling of the traditional while creating new textures and musical landscapes. Finally, a very slow fade...the music never ends."

Parvis

Bernard Andres, French harpist and composer, was born in Belfort in 1941. He pursued harp studies at the Paris Conservatory. In 1969, he joined the Philharmonic Orchestra of Radio France as a soloist. Despite a professional career with an important national orchestra, the mysteries and challenges of composition continue to haunt him. “Parvis” was one of his early compositions but would later enchant international audiences. The harp duo fused fresh contemporary sound and special effects with magnificent atonal melodic tension.

Two Preludes

George Gershwin composed the Preludes for Piano in 1926, two years after Rhapsody in Blue. Gershwin was born of Jewish immigrant parents in New York, and his style of composition is an American blend of ragtime, blues, jazz. These picturesque cultural snapshots was arranged for 2 harps by Maurice Draughn.

Mountains in the Spring Time

This folksong is originally a duet for man and woman voices written by Tsan-Fu Yiau (lyrics by Da-Ju Chen); transcribed for 4 harps by Joe Lee. The joyful melody is to convey the lyrics which describes a couple looking at the mountains in the spring time, and praise the nature as well as their love.

Libertango

Written by the famous Argentinean tango music composer Astor Piazzolla in 1974, the title comes from Spanish word "libertad" (means liberty). The Composer used the name to symbolize his break from traditional tango to new-style tango. transcribed for 4 harps by Joe Lee.