

Student Recital

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GRADUATE RECITAL

Yoshio Yamashita, composer, conductor, percussionist

1:00pm, Saturday, April 20, 2024

Jim & Joyce Faulkner Performing Arts Center

University of Arkansas

PROGRAM

'Brandenburg' Concerto No. 6 in B-flat Major, BWV 1051 (1718)

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), tr. Yamashita

I. [Without tempo indication]

Sterling LeDoux, oboe

Wesley Becherer, oboe and english horn

Catherine Ryan, alto saxophone

Ryan Montemayor, alto saxophone

Dr. Sarah Hetrick, tenor saxophone

Garland Watson, bass clarinet

Christopher Guevara, bass clarinet

Adolfo Hernandez, baritone saxophone

Meditations for three percussionists (2021)

Yoshio Yamashita (b. 2000)

III.

Yoshio Yamashita, percussion

Cori Fincher, percussion

Andrew Weidman, percussion

Variations on "Greensleeves" for brass and percussion (2024)

yoshio Yamashita (b. 2000)

Zachary Fincher, trumpet and flugelhorn
Kyle Lemieux, trumpet
Chris Dorner, horn
Austin Rushing, horn
Mac Dishman, trombone
Tyler Huff, trombone
Soph Ware, trombone
Brady Jones, tuba
Cori Fincher, percussion
Andrew Weidman, percussion

INTERMISSION

Four meditations by the river that we call Time (2024)

Yoshio Yamashita (b. 2000)

- I. Opening
- II. Chorale Variations
- III. Searching in this unquiet darkness
- IV. Reflection

Abigail Lawson, clarinet

Cadence Davis, clarinet

Yoshio Yamashita, marimba

Violin Partita in D minor, BWV 1004 (c. 1717-1720)

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), tr. Yamashita

V. Ciaccona (Chaconne)

Yoshio Yamashita, marimba

Yoshio Yamashita is student of Dr. Robert Muller

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the Master of Music in Instrumental Conducting

PROGRAM NOTES

Bach: “Brandenburg” Concerto No. 6 in B-flat Major, BWV 1051 (1718)

The six “Brandenburg” concerti were collected and presented by Johann Sebastian Bach to the Margrave of Brandenburg-Schwedt, Christian Ludwig, in 1721 (though the concerti were likely composed prior to 1721). Originally titled Six Concerts Avec plusieurs instruments (“Six Concertos for several instruments”), the concerti are regarded as some of the finest examples of the Baroque concerto grosso.

The sixth concerto is unusual in the absence of violins—in their place, two violas

provide the highest voices in the ensemble. The first movement opens with a subject in canon, starting between the two violas, but eventually permeating through the whole ensemble, often in highly polyphonic presentations.

Original instrumentation: 2 viole da braccio, 2 viole da gamba, 'cello, continuo (violone and harpsichord).

Yamashita: Meditations for three percussionists (2021)

Meditations is a short series of three pieces (ca. 15') that serve as reflections for the performers. The first and last movements are presented as mirror images of each other, where the inner movement is an episodic meditation punctuated with fragments of a faster, furioso motive.

All of the movements are connected through their reflection on the Bach chorale harmonizations of "O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden" ("Herzlich tut mich verlangen") from the St. Matthew Passion, BWV 244. Used as a cantus firmus, countermelody, and thematic material, the chorale is intimately woven throughout the fabric of all three meditations, often too slowly to notice.

The final movement is the most freeform in expression—the majority of the movement is set in free time; thus, the players can create a performance free from the constraints of rhythm and tempo to convey their inner dialogues through the music. The movement closes with the only overt statement of the Bach chorale, using part of the final (and unusually chromatic) setting from the St. Matthew Passion, the chorale "Wenn ich einmal soll scheiden".

Yamashita: Variations on "Greensleeves" for brass and percussion (2024)

The earliest known record of the English folk tune "Greensleeves" dates from around 1580 AD, though the tune itself can be traced to multiple manuscripts from the late 16th and early 17th century. Despite the persistence of the popular myth regarding Henry VIII as the composer of the tune, the king was, in fact, not the composer of the tune; the melody itself is written in a style of composition that reached Britain after Henry VIII's lifetime.

The harmonic progression (the ground bass) of the tune's refrain can be classified by the form of either the passamezzo antico, or its variant, the romanesca. Both progressions are typical of the Italian Renaissance and of the music of 16th-century Europe. Two "versions" of "Greensleeves" can be found in most printed editions today: one in which the verse is presented in the minor (Aeolian) mode, and one in which the verse is presented in the Dorian mode. Both modal presentations of the melody are present in this piece.

Var. I: Allegro molto con anima, quasi scherzo

The first variation consists of a straightforward harmonic presentation of the

theme, while interweaving (often quite sudden) changes in style, meter, dynamic, and orchestration.

Var. II: Scherzando

A more traditional scherzo-like presentation of the tune. While mostly subdued and pointillistic, several sharp interjections contrast with the minimalistic treatment of the melody.

Var. III: Tranquillo e poco rubato

A presentation of the theme in inversion, in the relative major key.

Var. IV: Andante con moto

A foreshadowing of the final variation, featuring complex counterpoint in four voices, often highly ornamented.

Var. V: Finale. Allegretto ma non troppo – Molto maestoso

The final variation encompasses what could be considered four variations in one—beginning with a fugal treatment of the theme, the music builds to a climax, only to disappear into a reprise of the scherzo-like character of the first two variations. As the scherzo morphs into a solemn march, the variation returns to the home key of D minor and the fugal subjects return. This time, after three voices enter in stretto, a restatement of the theme surfaces briefly, only to transition into a long dominant pedal—at the end of the pedal, the theme returns in augmentation, accompanied by motives from the fugal passages. Growing ever faster, the variation closes with a triumphant restatement of the theme's refrain.

Yamashita: Four meditations by the river that we call Time (2024)

I. Opening

Oftentimes, when the word “opening” is used in a musical context, it is used to describe the beginning of a piece of music, or the first passage of a work (or section of a work). In this case, however, the chorale serves as a meditation upon the concept of opening, in addition to being the beginning of the work— it is a meditation on what we may allow ourselves to experience both musically and non-musically if we only open our hearts and minds.

II. Chorale Variations

One of the many profound influences on my work has been the music of the late David Maslanka, and by proxy, the musical language of Johann Sebastian Bach. The “Hymn Tune with Four Variations” from Maslanka’s Song Book for alto saxophone and marimba, has always been a piece that has captured my imagination. While many pieces in this genre can be quite expansive, transforming a seemingly mundane theme into variations of enormous scale, Maslanka’s set of variations defies

that expectation—each variation is shorter than the one before it. This idea of musical “data compression”—preserving the melodic-harmonic context of the theme in increasingly shorter musical thoughts—drove the construction of the Chorale Variations.

While this particular movement is a bit less streamlined than Maslanka’s, it does use the same hymn tune as its theme (“Werde munter, mein Gemüte”). This movement is not only an homage to the “Hymn Tune with Four Variations”, but also to the profound impact that David Maslanka’s (and of course, J.S. Bach’s) music has had on my musical life.

III. Searching in this unquiet darkness

This movement was first simply entitled Searching. Upon further reflection, it became apparent that the qualities of the music needed more description than a single word. The title Searching in this unquiet darkness came to me while driving home in the dark—a sense of encapsulated, quiet isolation and emptiness within a loud and familiar, yet unfamiliar world. This movement’s meditative quality stems from the harmonic movement (among other elements), which in this case is particularly drawn-out, often spanning multiple bars with a single chord. This structure might be likened to a magnified view of a piece with frequent (dense) harmonic movement, such as one of J.S. Bach’s 371 harmonized chorales.

The movement entire could be considered a short meditation on the chorale “Wer nur den lieben Gott läßt walten”, which is presented at the end of Searching... and is the source for many of the long melody lines within.

IV. Reflection

To close the work, the chorale from the first movement returns, but minutely changed. Like the first movement (Opening), the title Reflection has several meanings—of course, it is to reflect upon the music that has come before, but it is also a reflection, in the literal sense, of the opening. Rather than a closure, it is simply another beginning—another part of an infinite circle.

Bach, tr. Yamashita: Chaconne from Violin Partita in D minor, BWV 1004 (ca. 1717-1720)

The late composer Johannes Brahms wrote this of the Chaconne:

“The Chaconne is, in my opinion, one of the most wonderful and most incomprehensible pieces of music. Using the technique adapted to a small instrument, the man writes a whole world of the deepest thoughts and most powerful feelings. If I could picture myself writing, or even conceiving, such a piece, I am certain that the extreme excitement and emotional tension would have driven me mad. If one has no supremely great violinist at hand, the most exquisite of joys is probably simply to let the Chaconne ring in one’s mind.”

Excerpted from Styra Avins, and Josef Eisinger, *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters* (2004).

Taking the form of a four-bar theme with sixty-four variations, the Chaconne is recognized as one of the landmark pieces of solo violin literature; so much so that the late violinist Yehudi Menuhin described it as “the greatest structure for solo violin that exists.” The piece itself carries an air of great challenge; a rite of passage—while perhaps not being the most technically demanding work in the canon, it has been described by legendary violinist-pedagogue Ida Haendel as “...one of the greatest masterpieces ever composed, although we can’t really say that because we can’t compare one piece to another. But it’s close to expressing everything about life: the tragedy, the sadness, the melancholy, the mystery.”

As is deserving of such a monumental work—lasting just as long as (if not longer than) the rest of the partita’s movements combined—the Chaconne has been arranged for many instruments in just as many different styles; to date, Bach scholar Raymond Erickson has identified at least two hundred different transcriptions and arrangements of the piece. Perhaps among the most notable might be the two more well-known piano transcriptions: Ferruccio Busoni’s monumental Romantic transcription and Johannes Brahms’ elegantly simple transcription for the left hand alone.

This transcription was primarily based on the versions of the Partita found in the *Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe* (1879) and *Neue Bach-Ausgabe* (1958), while also referencing the piano transcriptions made by Ferruccio Busoni and Johannes Brahms.

PERSONNEL

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