

The Ph.D./D.M.A. Programs in Music

December 10th, 2021 1:00 p.m.
Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall



Graeme Steele Johnson, clarinet Min Young Kang, piano

Introduction, Theme and Variations (c. 1819)

Gioachino Rossini
(1792–1868)

Lam Gods Impressions (2020)

Alain Crepin
(b. 1954)

INTERMISSION

Fantasien über Gedichte von Richard Dehmel, Op. 9 (1898)

Stimme des Abends

Waldseligkeit

Liebe

Käferlied

Alexander Zemlinsky
(1871–1942)
arr. James Breed

Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra (with Harp and Piano) (1948) Aaron Copland

Slowly and expressively

Rather fast

(1900–90)

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the D.M.A. degree.

Notes on the Program

Uncertainty clouds the history of the brilliant **Introduction, Theme and Variations** for clarinet and orchestra, ostensibly composed by **Gioachino Rossini**. The work does indeed share its source material with two of Rossini's dramatic operas written during his Naples years: the present Introduction opens nearly verbatim with the minute-long clarinet solo that introduces the aria "La pace mia smarrita" from the 1818 opera *Mosè in Egitto* (Moses in Egypt), and the Theme that fuels the ensuing Variations reproduces the virtuosic finale to "Mura felice...Oh quante lacrime" from *La Donna del Lago* (The Lady of the Lake), written in 1819. The clarinet work's demonstrable ties to Rossini, however, end with these operatic quotations. The present composition does not appear in any scholarly catalogues of Rossini's music, and the only known contemporary editions of its sheet music are a set of orchestra parts by Breitkopf & Härtel and an awkwardly ornamented manuscript clarinet part definitely not in Rossini's hand. Some scholars are comfortable attributing the piece to Rossini's student years and have suggested a date of composition as early as 1809, meaning that the clarinet work would predate the operas by a decade. While Rossini's extraordinary productivity did encourage self-quotation (during his most fruitful period, Rossini wrote an astounding 34 operas between 1810 and 1823), it seems more likely that the operas would have inspired the clarinet showpiece, given the popularity of virtuosic opera paraphrases in 19th-century Italy. These works figure especially prominently in the clarinet's repertoire; composers such as Verdi and Mascagni released some of their most beloved aria themes to clarinetist-composers, who milked the pyrotechnic capabilities of the instrument to create dazzling fantasies. Instrumental opera fantasies served the purpose of earworm advertising for opera composers, provided a platform for virtuosos to move and impress audiences, and, in an era before recorded sound, allowed people to listen to their favorite arias away from the opera house. In this case, Rossini may not have written the Introduction, Theme and Variations after all. Ferdinando Sebastiani, one such prodigious clarinetist-composer of the time, emerges as an alternative candidate for authorship of the work. But regardless of its author, the musical value of the Introduction, Theme and Variations is self-evident. Rossini's beloved arias find themselves at home on the clarinet, which has maintained its vocal associations since Mozart's seminal music for the instrument, and moments in the body of the work—the weeping *Largo minore* in particular—approach the genius of Rossini.

Much of the repertoire featured on this recital comes from a program I will perform in Belgium in January 2022 for the third round of the Ghent International Clarinet Competition. In 2020, the competition's artistic director, Belgian clarinetist Eddy Vanoosthuyse, commissioned three Belgian composers to each translate Flanders' most famous painting into music: the *Ghent Altarpiece* or the *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*, as it is also known, completed in 1432 by the Flemish brothers Hubert and Jan Van Eyck. The commission coincided with the completion of an eight-year restoration project (2012-2020), which has illuminated more vivid colors and revealed striking new details — most notably, uncovering the original face of the central Lamb of God, which has unusually humanoid features with forward-facing eyes that seem to look directly at the viewer of the painting.

Lam Gods Impressions was written by the Belgian saxophonist and composer **Alain Crepin**, and its rhapsodic pacing and coloristic treatment of harmony capture the mystery, religiosity, spaciousness and chromaticism of the painting. Moreover, Vanoosthuyse's cross-disciplinary initiative itself seems to respond to the soul of the *Altarpiece*, as the formidable scale of the Van Eyck masterpiece adds a temporal dimension to the experience of visually discovering the painting. Just as the polyptych—complete with 12 inner panels for an open view and additional back panels for a closed view—cannot be taken in in a single glance, listening to Crepin's piece for the first time, as most will, creates a sustained sense of discovery as the music unfolds in real time.

Poetry by the German writer Richard Dehmel has inspired music by such celebrated composers as Richard Strauss, Arnold Schoenberg, Anton Webern, Max Reger, Alma Mahler, Carl Orff, Kurt Weill and, indeed, **Alexander Zemlinsky**, the Austrian composer born 150 years ago this year. Except for a select few works, Zemlinsky's music is tragically underperformed in the United States, but while performing in Austria this summer I had the opportunity to take part in a number of concert programs connected to the composer's sesquicentennial anniversary, and so gained a greater exposure to his rich catalog of works. Zemlinsky has local relevance to this country as well; like many other artists, the Jewish composer and his wife were forced to flee the Nazi Party, first leaving Berlin for Vienna in 1933, and ultimately escaping via Prague to New York, where they rented an apartment at 46 West 83rd Street.

Zemlinsky readily holds his own in the formidable company of the aforementioned composers, and his **Fantasien über Gedichte von Richard Dehmel, Op. 9** from 1898 glow with the fading embers of German Romanticism in its twilight years. Indeed, the present work shares with Mahler's Lieder a sense of inner passion that aspires beyond the more personal means of its poetic and instrumental templates. Zemlinsky strikes a rather Impressionistic balance with direct, understated expression, brief climaxes that well and deflate before we catch our breath—music without preamble or postlude that is at once spiritual and precious. Also like certain Impressionists (Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* being the most famous example) and unlike Mahler's songs, Zemlinsky only uses Dehmel's poetry as point of departure to inspire his miniature tone poems, rather than literally setting text to music—Zemlinsky's Fantasies were originally written for solo piano. To lean once again on the clarinet's vocal heritage, however, the music adapts naturally to this duo arrangement, as if to suggest songs without words—the clarinet perhaps crooning the unheard voice of the poetic speaker.

Fantasien
über Gedichte von Richard Dehmel

I. Stimme des Abends

Die Flur will ruhn;
In Halmen und Zweigen
Ein leises Neigen

Dir ist als hörst du
Die Nebel steigen.
Du horchst — und nun:
Ihr Schweigen.

II. Waldseligkeit

Der Wald beginnt zu rauschen,
Den Bäumen naht die Nacht;
Als ob sie selig lauschen,
Berühren sie sich sacht.

Und unter ihren Zweigen,
Da bin ich ganz allein,
Da bin ich ganz mein eigen
Ganz nur Dein.

Fantasies
on poems of Richard Dehmel
(Free translation by James Breed)

I. Voice of Evening

The field lies still
Boughs and grasses leaning gently
In the rising mist.

All that can be heard, listening intently,
Are Nature's rustling's; but now
You move, and with your shoes
Disturb her silence.

II. Forest Rapture

Now begins the forest's rustling,
Trees caress, anticipating night;
As if listening, happy with their sounds,
Gently touching, hand in hand, in failing light.

Here, beneath their outstretched branches,
I am quite alone,
Lost in wonder, awe;
My soul entirely thine.

III. Liebe

Du sahst durch meine Seele in die Welt,
Es war auch deine Seele: still versanken
Im Strom des Schauens zwischen uns die Schranken
Es ruhten Welt und Du in mir gesellt.

IV. Käferlied

Maiker, Maiker, surr,
Bleib nur sitzen, burr.
Breite deine Fühler aus,
Mach zwei kleine Fächer draus,
Schwing sie hin und her,
Zähle mi wat vör.

Zähle, ich will mit dir zählen,
Wieviel noch Minuten fehlen
Bis mein Schätzulein
Wieder wird zu Hause sein.
Maiker, Maiker,
Sonst holt dich der Deiker.

III. Love

My soul within this world lives but through you;
So, also, does your soul through me.
Now the rivers' banks are down,
Our torrents are conjoined:
A calmly flowing world
Of you in me and me in you.

IV. Beetle Ditty

Beetle, Oh Beetle, still buzz!
Stay and become one of us.
Your feelers are wide,
Two small fans outside;
Rush along here and there,
Count up to who knows where.

Count with me to twenty-seven,
Many minutes still to heaven.
Now you've found my treasure box!
Back again, to pick the locks?
Beetle, my Beetle, still run;
Don't, though, forget to have fun!

Lionized as a jazz bandleader but ever eager to prove himself as a classical musician, Benny Goodman was behind some of the most important clarinet commissions of the 20th century; Bartók's *Contrasts* for clarinet, violin and piano, Poulenc's swan song *Clarinet Sonata*, and Copland's *Clarinet Concerto* are among some of the works written for "The King of Swing." Goodman commissioned the **Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra (with Harp and Piano)** from **Aaron Copland** in 1947, the year that the composer spent conducting and lecturing in Rio de Janeiro. Copland completed the piece by the end of the following year, and many Latin American jazz themes and Brazilian popular tunes found their way into the Concerto's second movement and intervening cadenza. The elegiac first movement, by contrast, is marked by Copland's characteristic "bittersweet lyricism": a lilting, pendulum accompaniment counterpointing soaring strings and crooning clarinet overhead.

The Concerto languished for two years after Copland completed it as Goodman, who retained exclusive performing rights for two years, repeatedly delayed the premiere and other options fell through (Despite Leonard Bernstein's best efforts on Copland's behalf, Serge Koussevitzky refused to perform the piece with the Boston Symphony; Bernstein wrote to Copland, "I fought with Kouss valiantly over the Clarinet Concerto, to no avail. Benny & Tanglewood don't mix in his mind."). Despite Goodman's technical prowess, the Concerto evidently stretched his abilities to their limit; Goodman insisted Copland transpose a few stratospheric passages lower, and the cascading coda in the original manuscript is marked with suggested changes by Goodman, with a note at the top from Copland that reads, "1st version—later revised—of Coda of Clarinet Concerto (too difficult for Benny Goodman)."

About the Artists

Winner of the Hellam Young Artists' Competition and the Yamaha Young Performing Artists Competition, **Graeme Steele Johnson** has established a multifaceted career as a clarinetist, writer, arranger and performance designer. He has appeared recently as a TEDx speaker, in recital at The Kennedy Center and Chicago's Dame Myra Hess series, and as a chamber musician at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall, the Ravinia Festival, Phoenix Chamber Music Festival, and Chamber Music Northwest. As a concerto soloist, he has performed with the Vienna International Orchestra, Springfield Symphony Orchestra, Caroga Lake and Vermont Mozart Festival Orchestras, and the CME Chamber Orchestra, led by Metropolitan Opera concertmaster Benjamin Bowman.

Johnson's diverse artistic endeavors range from his TEDx talk comparing Mozart and *Seinfeld*, to his music- and poetry-weaving show IMPRESSION, based on his octet arrangement of Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*, to his performances of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto in its original form on a rare elongated clarinet that he commissioned. In this same spirit of shedding fresh perspective on familiar music, Johnson has authored numerous arrangements of repertoire ranging from Mozart and Debussy to Gershwin and Messiaen, and performed them around the country and on recording for a 2021 release on MSR Classics. He has also recorded commercially for Hyperion Records and Musica Solis Productions alongside the likes of David Shifrin, Peter Wiley and Frank Morelli.

Johnson joined the artist roster of the Center for Musical Excellence in 2019 as its only clarinetist, and in 2021 was awarded the organization's inaugural Lee Memorial Scholarship to underwrite a new album to be recorded in the upcoming season. Additional recent festival appearances include Maverick Concerts, Music Mountain, Annapolis Chamber Music Festival, Lake George Music Festival, Caroga Lake Music Festival and The Banff Centre, and he has collaborated in chamber settings with such distinguished artists as Ani Kavafian, David Shifrin, Allan Vogel, William Purvis, Hannah Lash, Wei-Yi Yang, Imani Winds, the Callisto and KASA Quartets, Frisson Ensemble and Metropolis Ensemble. Upcoming performances include return engagements at the Phoenix Chamber Music Festival with David Shifrin, Valerie Coleman and the Miró Quartet, as well as the Yellow Barn festival and appearances in Belgium and Austria. As an orchestral musician, he performs regularly with the New Haven Symphony Orchestra, Albany Symphony Orchestra and Pegasus: The Orchestra.

Johnson's writing about music continues to be published by the international journal *The Clarinet*, as well as in program booklets by Carnegie Hall, Chamber Music Northwest, Yale and the Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, and as liner notes accompanying albums by David Shifrin, Ricardo Morales, Lloyd Van't Hoff and the Center for Musical Excellence. He holds graduate degrees from the Yale School of Music, where he was twice awarded the school's Alumni Association Prize. His major teachers include David Shifrin, Nathan Williams and Ricardo Morales, and he is now a doctoral fellow at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York under the mentorship of Charles Neidich. In 2021, Johnson joined the faculty of the Mahanaim School in Huntington, New York as Adjunct Professor of Clarinet.

Praised as "an absolute gem" by Montecito Journal, Korean-born pianist **Min Young Kang** enjoys a versatile career as a chamber musician, collaborative pianist, and music director. For the past ten years, Min Young has performed in concerts and recitals throughout the United States, France and South Korea, at venues that include Weill Recital Hall, Merkin Concert Hall, Château de Fontainebleau, and the Sejong Center M Theater. She has shared the stage with prominent artists including Ani Kavafian, Ettore Causa, Ole Akahoshi, David Geber, Linda Chesis, Nicholas Mann, Alan Kay, and Stephen Taylor.

Min Young recently released her first record “Remembering Russia” with PENTATONE with Spanish Violist Jesus Rodolfo in Oct 2021 and her playing was described as ‘sensitive’ and ‘nuanced with a lyrical right hand’ in the review by Tarraco Culture Club.

Min Young is a Founder/Artistic Director of Kallos Chamber Music Series (www.kalloscms.org) based in New Haven, CT. Kallos CMS is dedicated to cultivating a welcoming community of classical music lovers around an intimate, salon-style concert experience.

A prize winner at both the J.C. Arriaga Chamber Music Competition, Artur Balsam Duo Competition, and Lillian Fuchs Chamber Music Competition, Kang has also been recognized with numerous awards and scholarships, including the Talisman Energy Emerging Artist Award, Kraeuter Musical Foundation Award, Prix special du Directeur and Prix de Musique de chambre from Ecoles D’Art Americaines de Fontainebleau, the Renee and Richard Hawley Scholarship and the Manhattan School of Music’s President’s Award Scholarship.

Min Young has extensive collaborative experience, having worked with musicians of all “stripes” - strings, woodwinds, brass, vocal. She has worked as one of the recommended collaborative pianists for a prestigious international competition such as Naumburg International Competition and Longthibaud Violin Competition (New York Regional). She has also served as an official piano collaborator for the entrance auditions at Yale School of Music, Manhattan School of Music, and Mannes School of Music. As a vocal pianist, she has worked with the Center of Contemporary Opera and Manhattan Summer Voice Festival.

In summers past, Min Young served as a Collaborative Piano Fellow at the Music Academy of the West, and as a Vocal Piano Fellow at both SongFest and Aspen Music Festival and School, having studied closely with Graham Johnson, Alan Smith, Jonathan Feldman and Andrew Harley. She has also worked as a collaborative pianist at several other renowned summer music festivals, such as Ecoles D’Art Americaines de Fontainebleau, Banff International Music Festival.

Kang appeared at various masterclasses led by internationally recognized musicians such as Bruno Rigutto, Craig Rutenberg, Dominique Merlet, Graham Johnson, Gyorgy Sandor, Marilyn Horne, Jonathan Feldman, Margo Gerret, Lucy Shelton, Philipp Entremont, and Thomas Hampson.

Kang received a Master of Music (MM) as a full scholarship student from Eastman School of Music, where she studied collaborative piano and chamber music with Dr. Jean Barr. She completed a Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) in collaborative piano with a full scholarship and Kraeuter Musical Foundation Award from Manhattan School of Music under the tutelage of Dr. Heasook Rhee.

Min Young completed a Collaborative Piano Fellowship at the Yale School of Music, where she worked with instrumental students in recitals, lessons, and master classes, while also providing rehearsal coaching. She is a current staff pianist at Mannes School of Music in NYC.