

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

May 10th, 2022 1:00 p.m.

Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall



Joseph Vaz, piano

Rang de Basant (2012)

Reena Esmail
(b. 1983)

Serenade in A (1925)

Hymne
Romanza
Rondoletto
Cadenza finale

Igor Stravinsky
(1882–1971)

Fantasiestücke, Op. 12 (1837)

Des Abends
Aufschwung
Warum?
Grillen
In der Nacht
Fabel
Traumes Wirren
Ende vom Lied

Robert Schumann
(1810–56)

Trois Morceaux (1914)

D'un vieux jardin
D'un jardin clair
Cortège

Lili Boulanger
(1893–1918)

Three Dances from '*El sombrero de tres picos*' (1921)

Danza de los vecinos (Seguidillas)
Danza del molinero
Danza de la molinera

Manuel de Falla
(1876–1946)

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

Notes on the Program

In her exploration of Hindustani music, Indian-American composer **Reena Esmail** has studied several *ragas/raags*, or melodic frameworks for improvisation in Indian classical music. The raga *Basant*, which means ‘spring’ in Hindi, fascinated her for its dissimilarity to the Western concept of this season. Indeed, this raga, which dates at least from the 8th century, sounds dark and almost sinister to the European/American ear, exotic in what Esmail calls its “sinewy chromaticism.” The title of the piece, ***Rang de Basant***, is a play on words, referencing the 2006 Hindi film *Rang de Basanti*, which translates to ‘Give it the color of saffron.’ Esmail punnily drops the final i, instead wanting “to color [the piece] with the aesthetic of *Raag Basant*.”

Beginning with thick and murky chords that steadily evolve into *Basant*, the piece continues by excerpting a Hindustani *bandish*, or composition. Esmail takes a very pianistic approach to setting this bandish, writing ornaments and arpeggios that make the most of the rich, sonorous capabilities of the instrument, especially in its lower register. Building all the way to an explosion of the beginning thick chords, the piece concludes by having “a little bit of *Basant* bleed through at the end.”

One of the most influential people in musical modernism, **Igor Stravinsky’s** musical is generally analyzed in three periods: Russian, Neoclassical, and serial. Spanning the largest period of his compositional career, Neoclassicism defines the **Serenade in A**, both in the music and in its programmatic formulation, about which he wrote in his autobiography:

“The four movements constituting the piece are united under the title Serenade, in imitation of the *Nachtmusik* of the eighteenth century, which was usually commissioned by patron princes for various festive occasions and included, as did the suites, an indeterminate number of pieces. Whereas these compositions were written for ensembles of instruments of greater or less importance, I wanted to condense mine into a small number of movements for one polyphonic instrument. In these pieces I represented some of the most typical moments of this kind of musical *fête*.”

Another authorial note on the other part of the title: Stravinsky’s Serenade is *en la* (“in A”) “not in reference to its tonality, but to the fact that I had made all the music revolve about an axis of sound which happened to be the *la*.” Indeed, the note A takes a flexible but central role throughout the piece, serving as a point of departure and inevitable return for each of the four movements, never fully out of earshot in any tonal exploration. In fact, such an exploration is hardly possible, as each movement lasts less than four minutes, a result of being written for Stravinsky’s first gramophone recording contract. He wrote each movement to fit on one side of a 78 rpm record.

From his autobiography come short descriptions of each movement:

1. *Hymne*: “I began with a solemn entry, a sort of hymn;”
2. *Romanza*: “this I followed by a solo of ceremonial homage paid by the artist to the guests;”
3. *Rondoletto*: “the third part, rhythmical and sustained, took the place of the various kinds of dance music intercalated in accordance with the manner of the serenades and suites of the period;”

4. *Cadenza finala*: “and I ended with a sort of epilogue which was tantamount to an ornate signature with numerous carefully inscribed flourishes.”

Inspired by the title of a collection of writings about music, *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier*, by the German Romantic author E.T.A. Hoffmann, **Robert Schumann** named this collection of eight pieces *Fantasiestücke* during a trying time in his romantic pursuit of Clara Wieck. In 1837, he asked her hand in marriage, which she accepted. However, her father, and former teacher of Schumann, objected in the extreme, and a temporary estrangement between the two began. (It would be three more years until a judge would legally permit the marriage, when Clara turned 21.) During this time, Schumann made the acquaintance of another talented pianist, Robena Anna Laidlaw, to whom these pieces are dedicated.

This dedication is perhaps in name only. Upon publication in 1838, the work quickly entered the repertoire of Clara Wieck, and the two corresponded at some length about their effectiveness. Clara would perform selections from these *Fantasiestücke* for the rest of her life. She was not alone in her high estimation of these pieces - Laidlaw told Schumann how successful performances of them were in her travels, and Franz Liszt wrote that the “*Fantasy Pieces* have captured my interest in an extraordinary way. I play them truly with delight, and Lord knows there are not many things of which I can say the same.”

The *Fantasiestücke* characterize Florestan and Eusebius, respectively representative of Schumann’s passionate and dreamy nature. In his critical writings Schumann would sometimes take on the voice of these imaginary characters, and their voices are present in much of his musical work as well, representing the active vs. passive throughout his musical career. The eight pieces of *Fantasiestücke* are divided symmetrically into two books: in the first, each piece represents one of Florestan or Eusebius, while in the second, the two characters interact in each piece.

1. *Des Abends* (“In the Evening”): Introducing the work with exquisite intimacy, this piece symbolizes Eusebius at his most introspective. A saliently descending melodic line, associated throughout his oeuvre with Clara, is presented over gently swinging accompaniment throughout.
2. *Aufschwung* (“Soaring”): Florestan explodes into the picture, dramatically indulging in his desires. With quick changes of texture and dynamic, this piece never settles, bursting with energy all the way to a passionate finish.
3. *Warum?* (“Why?”): After the intensity of *Aufschwung*, Eusebius asks the titular question in reflection on Florestan’s overflow of energy. Innocent but thoughtful, this short piece comes to no satisfying answer, sincerely ending on a question just like the title.
4. *Grillen* (“Whims”): In a mostly good-natured mood, Florestan goes about his eccentricities. Humor, faux-drama, and performative flourishes all create an extravagantly whimsical vision of Schumann’s geniality and wit.
5. *In der Nacht* (“At Night”): This piece begins the second book dramatically, and in this movement can first be heard both Florestan and Eusebius - both night passions and nocturnal

calm. Burling accompaniment to fractured outcries defines the outer sections, and the inner section sings a song of love.

6. *Fabel* (“Fable”): Once again, the two sides of Schumann’s personality are presented in conversation with each other. Tranquilly restful passages alternate with whimsical and energetic displays for a rather humorous effect.
7. *Traumens Wirren* (“Dream’s Confusions”): The title of this piece indicates most strongly the complex interaction of Schumann’s characters. Eusebius’s dreaming is confused and tangles with Florestan’s emotion. With a particularly novel piano texture, this piece somewhat recalls the contemporarily new genre of piano etude.
8. *Ende vom Lied* (“End of the Song”): Wedding bells ring and all ends joyfully - until the very end. As Schumann later wrote to Clara, “everything ultimately dissolves into a merry wedding - but my distress for you comes back at the end and the wedding bells sound as if commingled with a death knell.”

The sister of the much more famous Nadia Boulanger, **Lili Boulanger** was a composer whose untimely death from tuberculosis at age 24 prevented her prodigious talent from developing into what would undoubtedly have been one of the most impressive oeuvres of the 20th century. These three short pieces, *Trois Morceaux*, written during her stay in Rome after winning the 1913 Grand Prix de Rome (as the first woman to do so), are a glimpse into the lighter repertoire of a composer who is known today for her large-scale choral and orchestral works.

1. *D’un Vieux Jardin* (“From an Old Garden”): Complex harmonies twist and turn surprisingly throughout, painting a magical picture of the old garden in the title.
2. *D’un Jardin Clair* (“From a Bright Garden”): In contrast, clear and open harmonies unfold more and more slowly, eventually achieving a dream-like state of bliss.
3. *Cortège* (“Procession”): Originally written as a duo for violin and piano, this arrangement is a simple but occasionally cheeky march to the finish line of these attractive salon-pieces.

The original version of the ballet “The Three-Cornered Hat” (*El sombrero de tres picos*) is a staple of orchestral concert programs around the world. **Manuel de Falla’s** colorful orchestration and masterful integration of Spanish folk music into concert music is responsible for the piece’s lasting popularity. In his own arrangement of these dances from the ballet for piano solo, orchestral color is traded for pianistic bravado and fresh piano textures.

1. *Danza de los vecinos* (“Dance of the Neighbors”)
2. *Danza del molinero* (“Dance of the Miller”)
3. *Danza de la molinera* (“Dance of Miller’s Wife”)

About the Artist

Joseph Vaz was born in Faro, Portugal, and has been studying piano since he was eight years old. He recently was a semifinalist in the 2020 West Virginia International Piano Competition, and has placed in several national and international competitions.

Joseph has performed at Weill Recital Hall in Carnegie Hall and numerous other venues in the United States, Italy, and Austria. His orchestral debut came with the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra in February 2015, and he has also performed as soloist with the Seven Hills Sinfonietta and other orchestral ensembles. He regularly presents solo and chamber recitals for his degrees and for his community. Joseph's recent appearances at summer festivals include the Bowdoin Music Festival and Chautauqua Piano Institute on scholarship.

Having completed his B.M. at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music with Emile Naoumoff and his M.M. at the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music with Ran Dank, he now is pursuing his D.M.A. at the CUNY Graduate Center with Julian Martin.

An active collaborative pianist, he has worked with all types of musicians in chamber music and with multiple orchestras for operas and concert programs. Interested in many genres of music-making, Joseph enjoys working in musical theatre, and recently appeared in the role of Oscar the rehearsal pianist in CCM's production of *42nd Street*.

Outside of music, Joseph has a Bachelor's degree in mathematics and a minor in French from Indiana University.