

Program Notes

Maurice Ravel (1875-1928) *Pièce en forme de Habañera*, arranged by Faith Carman

Maurice Ravel is one of the most well-known French composers of the twentieth century. Taking the mantle of Debussy's break with tradition, Ravel followed in his contemporary's footsteps with influences of jazz and cementing the "Impressionistic" sound. Inspired by the World's Fair held in Paris in 1889, young Ravel, like so many of his fellow artists, was captivated by the "exoticism" of different cultures like the Javanese gamelan, the music of Spain (a future favorite vacation destination for Ravel), and the music of the Russian composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. The influence of all can be heard in Ravel's piano works, orchestration, and the sheer number of works with Spanish titles or dances. The *Pièce en forme de Habañera* was first written as a *vocalise etude* (wordless voice study) for bass voice and piano in 1907. This year is significant as it was the same year as the multi-movement orchestral work *Rapsodie espagnole* was composed. The similarities between the *Pièce en forme de Habañera* and the *Habañera* third movement in *Rapsodie espagnole* are not so subtle in the as many gestures in the opening of the orchestral piece are direct quoted in the *vocalise etude*. The slow sultry dance provides the tension for the solo melodic line to twist and slide sensually above the repetitive dance rhythms in the accompaniment part. Transcribed later by Ravel for cello and piano, the piece lays well on harp and flute for a short and expressive piece with Spanish flair. - (M. O'Roark)

Gareth Farr (b. 1968) *Tāheke* for Flute and Harp

Gareth Farr is a New Zealand composer and percussionist who studied at the University of Auckland, Victoria University, and the Eastman School of Music. His teachers include Samuel Adler and Christopher Rouse, and he has been commissioned to write music for dance, theatre, television, and numerous prestigious organizations. His background as a percussionist is readily evident in his works, as his pieces feature many interesting and complicated rhythms. He has been particularly inspired by the percussion music of Balinese gamelan and the Pacific Rim.

Tāheke is no exception, as the intricate polyrhythms (sometimes with the harp playing duple against triple at the same time), displacement of beats, and frequent meter changes make this an exceedingly challenging piece of music. The work was written in 2002 and dedicated to flutist Lorna McGhee and harpist Heidi Krutzen who premiered it in Vancouver, Canada in April 2003. The title (meaning "waterfall") comes from the Maori people, indigenous Polynesians of New Zealand. Each of the three movements portrays a specific waterfall in the country. In his own program notes, Farr writes, "The first is the mighty Huka Falls near Taupo. The broad and placid Waikato River is channeled gradually into an increasingly narrow chute, ultimately erupting into a waterfall of unbelievable power and fury; then, as quickly as it has built up, the water subsides back into a calmly flowing river. In contrast to the Huka Falls with its famed reputation, the waterfall of the second movement is known only to my family. It is on our land in the Marlborough Sounds, utterly secluded in the bush and only accessible on foot through thick undergrowth. This waterfall is cool, dark and mysterious. The finale represents the grandeur and sprightly elegance of the Whangarei Falls in Northland, a beautiful cascade of sparkling rivulets." The movements follow the typical format of fast, slow, fast with the presto tempo of the last movement accelerating to an exciting finish. - (E. Moles)



Elisa Moles, *flute*
& Molly O'Roark, *harp*

DMA Chamber Recital
University of Illinois School of Music
Krannert Art Museum
Saturday, December 5, 2015
2:00 PM



Ravel



Farr

Jean Cras (1879-1932) *Quintette pour harpe, flute, violin, viola, et cello*

Jean Cras was a French composer born in Brest whose works are often overshadowed by his Impressionistic contemporaries Debussy, Ravel, and Fauré. As a naval officer, he fought in World War I and worked his way through the ranks serving as captain and ending his career as rear admiral. He was known for his scientific contributions and many of his inventions were adopted by the navy, including the "Cras Navigation Plotter" protractor. Inspired by his travels around the coast of Africa and his time out at sea, his music reflects the rhythmic complexity of the African rhythms, tempi like the capricious turbulence of the ocean, and the timbre of the French impressionists. Written over the course of four months on-board the *Provence*, *Toulon*, and completed on April 9th, 1928 as indicated on the score, this work was commissioned by Pierre Jamet, a Parisian harpist, for his quintet. In Cras's own words:

"The piece...is sprightly and good-natured, developing in a spirit of continuous [thematic] transformation. Evocative of dance-forms, its inspiration is, however, purely musical, and in no way literary. The four movements are brief and concise, void of unnecessary development sections. The work is written in concertato style."

featuring

Eliana Park, violin
Andreas Ruiz-Gehrt, viola
Ting Ya-Chiu, cello

Without one leading soloist, this piece presents an equal challenge to each player and can be thought of as a miniature *sinfonia concertante*. Filled with tempi changes marked with *serrez-desserrez* and *accelerando-rallentando* to indicate how the composer wished the piece to be interpreted as rhythmically fluid and flexible. Each movement is connected by small four-note pentatonic cell and a major second and each shifts stylistically from Romantic, pentatonic, to Impressionistic. A master of cyclical composition, the thematic material is continuously evolving into a sophisticated superstructure that demonstrates Cras's late style. Film score-esque in nature, this quintet offers listeners a chance to provide their own interpretation as these five instruments ebb and flow in a work that is glittering, moody, and quintessentially *français*. - (M. O'Roark)

Ástor Piazzolla (1921-1992) *Histoire du Tango for Flute and Harp*, arranged by K. Vehmanen

Argentinian Ástor Piazzolla was a virtuoso *bandoneón* player (a concertina or accordion-like instrument), bandleader, and composer. He learned to play the instrument as a young boy, encouraged by his father who loved the tango. At the time, he lived in New York with his family and spent a considerable amount of time playing at jazz clubs. At age sixteen, he moved back to Argentina and studied composition with Alberto Ginastera. He became more interested in classical music and was influenced by Stravinsky and Bartok. He became ashamed of his personal history and connection with the *bandoneón* and the tango genre until he studied with Nadia Boulanger in Paris, who upon hearing one of his original tango compositions exclaimed, "This is Piazzolla! Don't ever leave it!" He did not hesitate to follow this advice, and now Piazzolla is most well-known for his individual style of tango called *nuevo tango*, which features extreme chromaticism, dissonance, fugue, and jazz characteristics. Though it was initially not received favorably by lovers of more traditional tango forms, it became popular by the 1980s and is seen as a signature of Argentinian music.

Piazzolla originally wrote *Histoire du Tango* in 1986 for flute and guitar, though it has since been arranged for flute and harp, as well as guitar and violin. The title indicates the concept of the twenty-minute piece, which is four movements each showcasing a tango style of a particular era. The first movement *Bordel 1900*, introduces the audience to where the tango was first performed -- brothels. The spritely tempo, heavily accented

melodies, percussive effects, and seductive habanera rhythm in the harp portray this racy scene. The 2/4 meter is typical of tangos of this period. Movement two, *Café 1930*, reflects the trend of tangos as listening music only, rather than for dancing. This movement marked "Ad lib. (Romantica)" is slow, melancholy, and features poignant harp solos. *Nightclub 1960* is a combination of the dance music and romantic, slow music of the preceding movements, juxtaposing urgent "deciso" sections with reflective "pesante tristemente" segments. This style, featuring Argentinian tango with Brazilian *bossa nova* was popular in Buenos Aires nightclubs. The final movement *Concert d'aujourd'hui* ("concert of today"), was intended, as Piazzolla championed, as a tango for the classical concert hall. This jarring movement is the most dissonant, chromatic, and angular of the four, certainly showcasing Piazzolla's *nuevo tango* genre. As this work was arranged for harp from guitar, the harp is presented with some challenging pedal work, especially in the final two movements where chromaticism abounds. - (E. Moles)

*"Am I a harp that the hand of the Mighty may touch me,
or a flute that His breath may pass through me?"*

- Khalil Gibran



Cras

Piazzolla