3-24-2002

Faculty Recital: John White, piano

John White
Louise Mygatt
Paige Morgan
Frank Campos
Conrad Alexander

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John White, piano
with
Louise Mygatt, vocalist
Paige Morgan, English Horn
Frank Campos, flugelhorn
Conrad Alexander, vibes and percussion
Peter Chwazik, bass

"From one to five"

Jazz and jazz-related music

Recital Hall
Sunday, March 24, 2002
8:15 p.m
ITHACA COLLEGE FACULTY RECITAL

John White, piano

Assisted by:
Louise Mygatt, vocalist
Paige Morgan, English Horn
Frank Campos, flugelhorn
Conrad Alexander, vibes and percussion
Peter Chwazik, bass

Once I Loved

Two Rags:
  Piano-Rag Music
  Magnetic Rag

Three Beatles Songs:
  Blackbird
  Norwegian Wood
  Eleanor Rigby

Take the Coltrane

Liebesleid (Love’s Sorrow)

INTERMISSION

Friends

Some Other Time

Sea Journey

Step by Step

Beneath An Evening Sky

Heartsong

Recital Hall
Sunday, March 24, 2002
8:15 p.m
NOTES:

Antonio Carlos Jobim composed many bossa nova tunes that have become “standards” in contemporary jazz repertoire. “Once I Loved” introduces an element of melancholy into the first half of tonight’s program, an element that later connects with Fritz Kreisler’s “Liebesleid.”

Stravinsky explored the ragtime idiom at least two times prior to composing *Piano-Rag Music* (1919). The earlier explorations (“Ragtime Dance” in *L’histoire du soldat* and *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*) were composed before he ever actually heard ragtime music played. Upon hearing ragtime played live, he understandably changed his concept a bit. *Piano-Rag Music* contains many quick changes of mood, which to my mind is much closer to the school of “serious ragtime” represented by such composers as Scott Joplin and James Scott.

*Magnetic Rag* was the last solo piano rag that Joplin composed. The harmonic design of this piece differs from the more standard model typical of serious ragtime pieces, resembling a scheme much more idiomatic of 19th-century European salon music.

Louise Mygatt digs deep down into her soul roots for the Beatles tunes *Blackbird, Norwegian Wood,* and *Eleanor Rigby*. This is entirely appropriate given that in the 1960s Paul McCartney penned *Blackbird* with allusions to the civil rights movement in the United States. *Norwegian Wood* is about an entirely different kind of bird taking flight (and has been a favorite of jazz musicians for years). *Eleanor Rigby* is one of the saddest songs I know.

The title for *Take the Coltrane* is a word play making reference to a famous Ellington composition as well a seminal saxophone player. The placement of this piece in the program following *Eleanor Rigby* is quite intentional. The tune is a blues form. Not only is it great to play the blues, doing so often cures one of the blues (at least momentarily).

Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962) was a famous Austrian violinist who spent much of his performing career (and the last part of his life) in America. *Liebesleid (Love’s Sorrow)* was originally written for violin and piano. Essentially a character piece, the original version evoked the ethos
of the Austrian ländler, a slow folk dance in triple meter. The version you hear tonight is my adaptation of an arrangement recorded by the jazz composer/pianist Clare Fischer and references the style of a bossa (in jazz parlance, “a latin feel”—at least the style connection to the original is alliterative!). The ethos of the title and music connect back with the opening Jobim tune, hence framing the first half of the program within the bittersweet, darker side of our emotional life.

Chick Corea’s Friends is just downright happy and fun to play! His piece Sea Journey was originally recorded as a piano solo under the title “Song for Sally.” Improvisers who “sail the musical seas” often come across interesting things floating in the water that turn out to be quite useful in the right context. Don’t be surprised if your hear smatterings of Shostakovich and Schwantner in the performance tonight.

Jazz performance tradition has long appropriated material from popular commercial styles and music theater. Some Other Time, from the musical “On The Town (1944),” serves as inspiration for a trumpet and piano ballad.

Beneath An Evening Sky was composed by Ralph Towner, the composer/multi-instrumentalist probably best known for his work with the ensemble Oregon. Although this piece has been recorded by Towner in many different arrangements, my favorite is that on Oregon’s recording “45th Parallel” featuring Paul McCandless’s English Horn. More than any other, I believe this instrumentation best captures the nocturnal ethos implied by the title and embodied in the music.

The unconventional harmonic design of Peter Chwazik’s Step By Step presents many challenges to the improviser. You’d best step carefully through the chord changes in this piece, else you’ll wind up in territory that seems . . . too familiar.

Jazz pianist/composer Fred Hersch wrote and recorded Heartsong in the late 1980s. The version you hear tonight is an adaptation of an arrangement by clarinetist Eddie Daniels. To me, the title clearly says what making music with friends is all about.