4-11-2006

Concert: Ithaca College Chamber Orchestra

Ithaca College Chamber Orchestra

Elina Akselrud

Jeffrey D. Grogan

Devin Hughes

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ITHACA COLLEGE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Elina Akselrud, piano
Jeffrey D. Grogan, conductor
Benjamin Aneff, graduate conductor
Devin Hughes, graduate conductor

Ford Hall
Tuesday, April 11, 2006
8:15 p.m.
PROGRAM

Trittico Botticelliano

La primavera
L’adorazione di magi
La nascita di Venere

Devin Hughes, conductor

Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 54

Adagio-Allegro vivace

Elina Akselrud, piano
Benjamin Aneff, conductor

Symphony no. 90 in C major, H. 1/90

Adagio-Allegro assai
Andante
Menuet
Finale: Allegro assai

Robert Schumann
(1810-1856)

Franz Josef Haydn
(1732-1809)

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Program Notes

Trittico Boticelliano

Although Respighi is best known for his glittering, even garish, suites of tone poems for large orchestra, many feel that some of his best work may be found in his more restrained and modestly scaled efforts. One such example is the Trittico Boticelliano (Three Botticelli Pictures, 1927) for chamber orchestra, a three-movement suite based on famous paintings by the Renaissance master Botticelli. Despite the work's economical scoring, it is fully as colorful and beguiling as the fulsome and flashy Pines of Rome (1924) or Fountains of Rome (1916).

Commissioned by the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation and premiered in Vienna in 1927, the Pictures demonstrate not only Respighi's ear for fresh and beautiful sonorities, but also his interest in the history of art in his native Italy. "La Primavera" (Spring) unfolds as a pastorale, with rustlings of nature, bird songs, and "antique" dance rhythms. "L'adorazione dei Magi" (Adoration of the Magi) evokes a mood of medieval devotion through its employment of old church modes and Gregorian chant-influenced melodies. The brilliant finale, "La nascita de Venere" (Birth of Venus), is an aural impression of the famous painting of the goddess borne upon a giant oyster shell. Skirling figures and bright sonorities suggest the play of waves, providing a backdrop for Venus' sensuous melody. (by Joseph Stevenson)

Piano Concerto

Robert Schumann followed up his remarkable "year of song" (1840) with another compositional annus mirabilis. 1841 saw the creation of the composer's first works for orchestra, including the Symphony No. 1, Op. 38, the Symphony No. 4, Op. 120 (substantially revised and published a decade later), and the Overture, Scherzo and Finale, Op. 52. In each of these works, thematic unity among movements is of central importance, an idea widely explored in the Romantic period in guises ranging from the idee fixe of Berlioz's Symphonie fantastique (1830) to the leitmotives of Wagner's music dramas.

Schumann's other major work from 1841 is the Fantaisie in A minor for piano and orchestra. Though the Fantaisie as such has ultimately disappeared from the repertoire, it is only because it evolved into the first movement of the composer's Piano Concerto in A minor, completed in 1845. In this year Schumann appended two movements to the revised Fantaisie; the composer's wife, the remarkable pianist Clara Wieck Schumann, premiered the result, a complete concerto, in Leipzig on New Year's Day, 1846.

The shifting moods that characterize so much of Schumann's music are clearly evident in the Piano Concerto. Still, as in the composer's contemporaneous works noted above, and despite the interval between the composition of the Concerto's first movement and the remaining two, intermovement unity is one of the work's primary concerns. There is a quasi-symphonic character to the Concerto, in distinct contrast to the then-revailing view of the concerto as primarily a vehicle for virtuosic display, exemplified by the concertante works of Franz Liszt and Niccolo Paganini. Indeed, Liszt showed little enthusiasm for Schumann's Concerto and tweaked the composer (who had earlier written a "Concerto Without Orchestra") by referring to it as a "concerto without piano."
Though the work's technical demands are not inconsiderable, they are almost wholly subservient to thematic interest and structural clarity. The Concerto opens with a downward-surging, darkly martial introductory gesture. The first theme, marked by a high-minded dignity, becomes the prime source of melodic material, spawning closely related themes that alternately brood and, in the major mode, provide respite from the sober atmosphere. The development caroms from one mood to the next in almost dizzying fashion, all the while exploring the ambiguities of the themes' various components. Schumann cannily uses the lengthy cadenza as a battleground for further emotional conflict before ending the movement with a decisive return of the lofty first subject. (by Michael Rodman)

**Symphony No. 90**

Haydn's Symphonies Nos. 90-92 comprise a trio of interconnected works composed for the Comte d'Ogny in Paris in the years just prior to Haydn's journey to England. In these later symphonies, and certainly in the forthcoming "London" Symphonies, the composer demonstrates a complete, individual command of the orchestra and of symphonic form.

The idea of a slow introduction to the opening fast movement of a symphony is really little more than an abridgment of the slow movement that typically opened the Baroque sonata da chiesa. In the Symphony No. 90, Haydn solves the problem of unifying the introduction and the main body of the movement by allowing the subsidiary musical material of the introduction to become the main theme of the Allegro assai which follows. The movement is festive and energetic as, indeed, are most of the composer's symphonies in the joyous key of C major.

The slow movement is more reserved in tone. Although possessed of delicate lyricism, and a somber middle section in F minor, the movement as a whole seems surprisingly non-emotional, perhaps a comment on the superficial concerns of the French aristocracy for whom the work was composed. This atmosphere of restrained, distant dignity continues in the Menuet and Trio: one wishes at times for the more truly German, foot-stomping dances that find their way into other Haydn minuets. The humorous finale, cast in a monothematic sonata-allegro form, is notable for its extended coda, which begins after an unexpected turn into the remote key of D flat major. (by Blair Johnston)

Winner of the 2005, Ithaca College Piano Competition, Elina Akselrud was born in Ukraine in 1989. She received her first piano lessons from her parents at the age of 4. Later she was accepted to the Lysenko special music school (Kiev, Ukraine), where her major piano teachers were Irina Lipatova and Irina Barinova.

Elina is a prizewinner of several international competitions for young pianists (Greece, Italy, Poland, Ukraine). She made appearances with the National Academic Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine, Chamber Orchestra "Renaissance", Marylupol Chamber Orchestra and others. She gave solo recitals in Switzerland, Germany, Austria, and Ukraine.

In July 2005 Elina moved to the United States with her family. Soon after her arrival she won the first prize in both categories (solo and concerto) in the Ithaca Piano Competition. Currently Elina is studying with Irina Morozova in the Special Music School in New York City.
ITHACA COLLEGE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Jeffrey D. Grogan, conductor

Violin I
Megan Atchley
Natasha Colkett
Brenna Gillette
Kate Goldstein
Christopher Jones*
Joshua Modney
Maeve O'Hara
Elizabeth Stein

Violin II
Timothy Ball
Colin Oettle
Mary Raschella
Shawn Riley
Laura Sciavalino
Christian Simmelink*

Viola
Lauren Buono
Sayer Palmer*
Sara Shepard

Cello
Sam Boase-Millet
Jennifer Chieffalo
Alana Chown *
Diana Geiger

Double Bass
Xander Lott
Patrick O'Connell*

Flute
Melissa Bravo
Emily Watson*

Oboe
Emily DiAngelo*
Christopher Neske

Clarinet
Wolcott Humphrey
Matthew Libera*

Bassoon
Katie Barker
Jennifer Meyers*

Horn
Michael Bellofatto*
Rose Valby

Trumpet
Lindsey Jessick
Nikola Tomic*

Timpani/Celeste
Andrew Sickmeier

Piano
Joshua Horsch

Harp
Myra Kovary**

* denotes principal
guest artist
Concert Calendar

April

12  8:15  Brass Choir; Erik Kibelsbeck, conductor
13  8:15  Jazz Workshop; Keaton Akins, graduate musical director
17  8:15  Contemporary Music Chamber Ensemble; Jeffrey D. Grogan, director
18  8:15  Percussion Ensemble; Gordon Stout, director
19  8:15  Opera Workshop; Denes VanParys, musical director
20  8:15  Percussion Ensemble; Conrad Alexander, director
21  8:15  Symphony Orchestra; Jeffrey D. Grogan, conductor
22  8:15  Choir; Janet Galvan, conductor and Michael Lippert, graduate conductor
23  4:00  Chorus; Janet Galvan, conductor; Madrigal Singers; Elizabeth Swanson, conductor
        8:15  Vocal Jazz Ensemble; Lauri Keegan, musical director
24  8:15  Women’s Chorale Elizabeth Swanson, conductor
25  8:15  Symphonic Band; Timothy Reynish, conductor
26  8:15  Concert Band; Mark Fonder, conductor
27  8:15  Wind Ensemble; Timothy Reynish, conductor

May

13  8:30  39th Gala Commencement Eve Concert
          (Ben Light Gymnasium)