

CHICKEN CROSSING

A Bassoon Recital

Monday, 15 May 2006, 5:30 pm

Holden Chapel, Harvard Yard

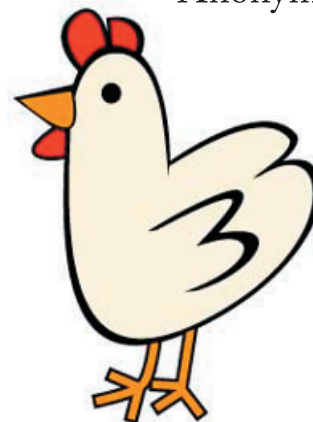
David Richmond '06, bassoon

Q: Why did the chicken cross the road?

A: To get away from the bassoon recital.

–Anonymous

with Nora Bartosik '08, piano; Annelisa Pedersen '06, soprano; Matthew Kan '07, violin; Alex Shiozaki '09, violin; Pierre Sowemimo-Coker '09, viola; Evan Mallory '07, cello; and Justin McCarty '06, double bass.



Alexandre TANSMAN (1897 - 1986)

Sonatine for Bassoon and Piano (1952)

I. Allegro con moto

II. Aria

III. Scherzo

The recital opens as my first term at Harvard did, with **Music 51**. My theme this afternoon suggests that a bassoon recital requires justification; for this, Stravinsky's thoughts about tradition (*The Poetics of Music*) resonate for me (and with this very neoclassical Sonatine) just as much today as they did four years ago. "Contrast is everywhere. One has only to take note of it. Similarity is hidden; it must be sought out." Today, as then, "I search for the similarities in the rhythms of our separate songs, hints of recognition with every smile, every word, every step."

Paul HINDEMITH (1895 - 1963)

Sonata for Bassoon and Piano (1938)

I. Leicht bewegt

II. Langsam – Marsch – Beschulss, Pastorale Ruhig

Paul Hindemith was not the most popular composer in Germany when he wrote his bassoon sonata, for reasons that may have had something to do with Alex Rehding's fall 2004 seminar, **Music 220ar: Theories of Degeneration**. Sometimes dismissed as a trivial recital piece for its modest (simple? regressive? degenerate?) technical demands, it is often hacked through by early high school bassoonists, including this one. I have always wanted to revisit it. This afternoon, I finally do.

Franz SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

Winterreise Op. 89, D.911 (1827)

3. Gefror'ne Tränen

4. Erstarrung

Schubert Lieder on bassoon? Well, why not? I fell in love with Winterreise in **Music 154**, but it wasn't until I met San Francisco Symphony bassoonist Steve Dibner at Aspen in the summer of 2004 that I began to realize I had a voice: in reed and hands, not larynx. Inspired by legendary French flutist Marcel Moyse, Steve once wanted to be a Verdi baritone until he discovered the color and magic of the double reed. Coincidentally, in Aspen that August I played principal for *Rigoletto*, on Steve's assignment. My relationship with music would never be the same.

Peter MCMURRAY (1981 -)

Four Prayers for Bassoonist and Soprano (2006)

- I. Thanksgiving: The Exile of El Cid
- II. Inquiry: The Word on the Street (Cellular Monologue)
- III. Intercession: Haggling for Sodom
- IV. Adoration: A Psalm of Praise

Texts from *Cantar de Mio Cid* (traditional), Some Guy's cellphone conversation (overheard in Harvard Square), *Genesis* 18 (Vulgate), and "Stalin" by Ashug Gara.

From Schubert and my bassoon-without-words, I move to a piece I commissioned for bassoon and (or perhaps with) voice. The only piece here without an academic course associated – not for lack of options among some thirty-five half-courses – these *Prayers* are actually, for me, the heart of today's program, and perhaps could not have been written for anyone besides Annelisa (one of my closest friends across four years here) and myself.

Antonio VIVALDI (1678 - 1741)

Concerto for Bassoon in A minor no. 2, RV 498 (ca. 1730?)

- I. Allegro
- II. Larghetto
- III. Allegro

Vivaldi wrote more solo concerti for bassoon than for any other instrument besides violin, which is all the more astonishing since his output probably makes up more than half of the standard repertory of bassoon concerti. Energetic but never to excess, these works have some of every part of what it means to be a bassoonist: generally good-humored, occasionally the butt of jokes, always responsive to the inner line, and, sometimes, passionately melancholy (but in a *good* way). As music that is almost three hundred years old, this concerto reminds me – as I have consistently been reminded in studying "early music" in [Music 97r](#), [Music 182](#), and [Music 191rs](#) – that music that made listeners get up and move centuries ago remains reassuringly invigorating. People of any stripe, as it turns out, have people feelings, people worries, and dance people dances.

Jean FRANÇAIX (1912 - 1997)

Divertissement for Bassoon and String Quintet (1973)

- I. Vivace
- II. Lento
- III. Vivo assai
- IV. Allegro

With this "diversion," my recital ends as it began: with a joke. The question is, what kind of joke? Though Françaix is a different sort of composer than Francis Poulenc, the piece reminds me quite a bit of Poulenc's 1939 Sextet for Winds and Piano, which I played this spring in [Music 180](#). Though written considerably more tightly, and lacking anything approaching the Poulenc's astonishing ending, both pieces are difficult to take seriously only because it is difficult to tell when they are kidding and when they are not. So perhaps this *Divertissement* says nothing at all for this recital and this bassoonist. Or perhaps it says everything?

I would like to thank the musicians onstage with me today: you are all fabulous. I would also like to thank Peter McMurray for writing music for me, my roommates in Eliot House GZ for helping me find a sense of home here at Harvard, my sister Leslie for her love and support, my incomparable twin sister Emily for *her* love and support (especially logistical for this afternoon!), and my parents for the same and so much more.

Peter McMurray
Four Prayers for Bassoonist and Soprano (2006)

I. Thanksgiving: The Exile of El Cid

Text from *Cantar de mio Cid*, traditional

De los sos ojos tan fuertementre llorando
tornava la cabeça e estávalos catando,
vio puertas abiertas e uços sin cañados,
alcándaras vazías, sin pielles e sin mantos
e sin falcones e sin adtores mudados.
Sospiró mio Çid, ca mucho avié grandes cuidados,
fabló mio Çid bien e tan mesurado,
“Grado a ti, Señor, Padre que estás en alto,
esto me an buelto mios enemigos malos.”
Sospiró, fabló, fue a desolar.

[From his eyes so sorely weeping,
he turned his head and was looking at them,
he saw open gates and doors without locks,
empty hangers, without furs or mantles
and without falcons or molted goshawks.
My Cid sighed, for he had many grave concerns,
my Cid spoke well and so measuredly,
“Thanks to you, Lord, Father who are on high,
this my evil enemies have brought upon me.”
He sighed, he spoke, and he went to devastate.]

II. Inquiry: The Word on the Street
(Cellular Monologue)

Text from Some Guy’s cellphone conversation,
overheard in Harvard Square
“Oh my God, where is she?”

III. Intercession: Hagglng for Sodom

(Text from *Genesis* 18, Vulgate; translation from the King James Bible)

Domine si inveni gratiam in oculis tuis ne transeas servum tuum. Quinque! Decem! Viginti! Triginta! Triginta sex! Quadraginta tres!

Et adpropinquans Abraham ait: Numquid perdes iustum cum impio. Si fuerint quadraginta tres iusti in civitate peribunt simul et non parces loco illi propter quadraginta tres iustos si fuerint in eo. Absit a te ut rem hanc facias et occidas iustum cum impio fiatque iustus sicut impius non est hoc tuum qui iudicas omnem terram nequaquam facies iudicium.

Quia semel coepi loquar ad Dominum meum cum sim pulvis et cinis. Quid si minus quadraginta tres iustis septem fuerint delebis propter septem universam urbem. Sin autem triginta inventi fuerint quid facies? Ne quaeso indigneris Domine si loquar, quid si inventi fuerint ibi viginta? Quia semel coepi loquar ad Dominum meum quid si inventi fuerint ibi decem?

Obsecro ne irascaris Domine si loquar adhuc semel, quid si inventi fuerint ibi quinque?

[My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant. Five! Ten! Twenty! Thirty! Thirty-six! Forty-three!

And Abraham said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be forty-three righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the forty-three righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes: Peradventure there shall lack seven of the forty-three righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of seven? Peradventure there shall be thirty found there. Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall twenty be found there. Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be ten found there.

Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure five shall be found there.]

IV. Adoration: A Psalm of Praise

Text from the poem, “Stalin,” by Ashug Gara, Azerbaijani poet

"Сталин"

Мы свободными людьми
Лишь с тобою стали.
Сто столетий проживи,
Несравнимый Сталин!

Слава светлая твоя
Облетела все края.
Ясным именем твоим
Звезды засверкали.

Всенароды на земле,
Век прожив во тьме и мгле,
С каждым годом все терлей
Шепчут имя—Сталин!

Слава громкая твоя
Прокатилась за моря,
Гулче, чемвесенний град,—
Звонче водопада.

Сталин выше, чем гора,
Краше, чем весны пора.
Так поет ашуг Гара
Из Кировабада.

[We became a free people
Because of thee.
May thou live a hundred centuries,
Incomparable Stalin!

Thy brilliant glory
Burst forth to all places.
By thy clarion name
The stars gave forth light.

All people on the earth,
Living for ages in darkness and fog,
With each year ever more fervently
Utter the name—Stalin!

Thy thundering glory
Sounded beyond the sea,
More resonant than
a town in springtime,
More sonorous than a waterfall.

Stalin, greater than a mountain,
More beautiful than springtime.
So also the poet, Ashug Gara,
From Kirovabad.]