

TWO CELLISTS

GEOFFREY GARTNER
+
ASHLEY WALTERS



NOV. 17, 2008
8 P.M.
MANDEVILLE
RECITAL
HALL

Jeanloup Siéff

6:30 PM

GEOFFREY GARTNER, cello

Associate artist: Fiona Chatwin - soprano

Capriccio per Siegfried Palm

Krzysztof Penderecki

Song (Graphis 192b) for any voice(s) and instrument(s)

Dick Higgins

Projection 1 for solo cello

Morton Feldman

Sonata for Solo Cello, Op.28

Eugène Ysaÿe

I lento e sempre sostenuto

ii poco allegretto e grazioso – meno – poco lento – a tempo

iii adagio – lento

iv allegro tempo fermo – un poco meno mosso ma non troppo – vivo – a tempo

***** Cigarette-length pause *****

I Wish you all joy of the worm [WP]

Judè Weirmeir

Please turn off all mobile phones and pagers

PROGRAM NOTES

Capriccio per Siegfried Palm (1957)

Krzysztof Penderecki (b.1933)

The distinguished German cellist Siegfried Palm (1927-2005) was a gifted performer and teacher who specialized in promoting and interpreting avant-garde music, and once said, 'Strictly speaking, I have never seen an unplayable cello part.' He gave first performances of many works by modern composers including those by Stockhausen, Zimmerman, Penderecki, Xenakis, Zillig, Kagel and others.

One of Palm's most productive working relationships was with Polish composer, Krystof Penderecki. This collaboration produced both the Sonata for cello and orchestra (1964), the first Cello Concerto (1972) as well as

the Capriccio per Siegfried Palm (1957), written when the composer was just 22 years old.

As the Capriccio's full title implies, the personality of one of the world's great cellists has a marked effect on the work's character. This is a piece brimming with character. The Capriccio traverses a wide array of emotions, yet humor is never far away, Penderecki skillfully juxtaposing moments of almost comic relief (the flagrant use of an eleven note tone-row notwithstanding) with explosive volleys of percussive extended techniques.

Song (Graphis 192b) for any voice(s) and instrument(s) (1982)

Dick Higgins (1938-1998)

Dick Higgins is primarily remembered in art text books as a performance artist who was one of the founding fathers of the Fluxus attitude. However, he left a huge legacy of work traversing many mediums including poetry, translations, musical compositions and printmaking. He was the author of several books, including lengthy polemics on media, the avant-garde and the evils of post-modernism. Higgins' creative life began with music, (like many of the other Fluxus artists, he studied composition with John Cage), and he continued to periodically compose music for the rest of his life.

Song is a short work based on words by the Latin poet P. Optatianus Porphyrius (fl.325 AD) and is part of a long series of compositions (Graphis) exploring differing modes of graphic notation. Both performers read from the same one page score: a tangle of words, letters and arrows. Higgins crops these tiny fragments in the design to form the graphic images used in his Piano Sonata No.2, to which this is a companion work. Song is dedicated to New York sound artist Charlie Morrow.

Projection 1 for solo cello (1950)

Morton Feldman (1926-1987)

Morton Feldman wrote five pieces for diverse instrumentation bearing the Projection title. The first of these, for solo cello, was composed in 1950 and represents Feldman's first published excursion into the realm of graphic notation.

"My desire here was not to 'compose', but to project sounds into time, free from a compositional rhetoric that had no place here. In order to not involve the performer (i.e., myself) in memory (relationships), and because the sounds no longer had an inherent symbolic shape, I allowed for indeterminacies in regard to pitch. In the Projections only register (high, middle or low), time values and dynamics (soft throughout) were designated."

The sound-world of Projection 1 is hushed and intense, with silence far more present than sound. Feldman limits the sonic content to just three elements: harmonics, pizzicato and arco. Pitch, dynamics and articulation are left completely unspecified and open to the performer.

The Projection scores are written using a simple grid notation which proved to be integral to several of Feldman's subsequent compositions such as the Intersection series (1951-3), Atlantis (1959) for orchestra, The Straits of Magellan (1961), and The King of Denmark (1964) for solo percussion.

Sonata for Solo Cello, Op.28

Eugène Ysaÿe (1858-1931)

Belgian born Eugene Ysaÿe was one of the most celebrated violin virtuosos of the day. He led a flourishing concert career as a violinist and conductor, touring extensively in Europe, Russia and the United States. Many prominent composers dedicated works to him, including Claude Debussy, Camille Saint-Saëns, César Franck and Ernest Chausson. (Chausson's exquisite Poème for violin and orchestra will be performed by the UCSD Chamber Orchestra at 8pm on December 1st in the Mandeville Auditorium.)

Ysaÿe was a highly regarded teacher whose more respected pupils include Josef Gingold, William Primrose and Nathan Milstein. He was also active as a composer, and today he is usually remembered for his Six Sonatas for Solo Violin (Op.27), one of the touchstones of the violin canon. The rest of his output, which includes much chamber music, pieces for orchestra and an opera, remains virtually unknown.

Ysaÿe was most famous as in interpreter of the some of the great late romantic composers such as Max Bruch, Camille Saint-Saens and Cesar Franck, however, in his compositions, particularly the Sonata for Solo Cello the harmonic language is far more closely allied with that of Russian mystic Alexander Scriabin. The densely polyphonic writing features many complex enharmonic twists as well as lengthy passages in both the octatonic and whole-tone scales. The tritone interval abounds, with harmonic resolution of any kind a rarity, at times the writing bordering on atonality.

Ysaÿe's use of rhythm is just as original, each movement taking a distinctly different approach to meter. The time signature frequently changes, and the score is littered with directions for rubato. Syncopation abounds and in the brief third movement, a recitativo, Ysaÿe dispenses with barlines and meter altogether. This startling use of rhythm and harmony creates a highly volatile atmosphere whose instability becomes the driving force behind the entire piece.

**I Wish You All Joy of the Worm (2006) [World Premiere]
Jude Weirmeir (b.1970)**

"I
Wish You All Joy of
the Worm" is a solo cello work that
behaves like an operetta of extremely
petite proportions. It is an anti-epic in
which the roles of
the singers, pit
orchestra, stage
hand, prop
manager,
supernumerary,
composer and
critic are all
performed by
a single
individual.
Through the
process of
juggling these
multifarious
roles the
performer
channels a
schizoid
psychological state
that basks in a
playful
meaninglessness.
To further
uncertainty and
meaningless-
ness the
performer is
asked to
perform these
roles with the
cello turned
upside-down. It
is an absurd
reference to East
Indian Carnatic
violin position
(absurd only
because the
technique is
impractical on the
cello). The

cello allows for new
redefining of the artists approach to the instrument -- a reinvention that
promotes failure, difficulty, frustration and, above all, problem solving. The title of
the work and much of the spoken and sung text is from Shakespeare's "Anthony
and Cleopatra". The role of Cleopatra is extremely complicated and shifts radically
from queen, whore, warrior, mother, victim and tyrant. Cleopatra is arguably the
most complicated woman in Shakespeare's output and the multiplicity of her
personae furthers the plays profound nihilism. "I Wish you All Joy of the Worm"
draws heavily from the death
Cleopatra fondles

upside-down
techniques and iconoclastic
combination of sex and
death that verges on
existential
nothingness. The
cello solo is
inspired by
Cleopatra using
her numerous
facades,
ambiguity and
multiple
meanings as a
springboard for
the diverse tasks
required of the
cello.
Throughout the
work quotation is
used both in the
sung/spoken material and
the instrumental music. The quotes
are cut, erased, dissected and rearrange
in a manner that utterly rejects the notion
of craft and skill. The unwilling participants
of this quasi-homage include Berio,
Dallapiccola, Ferneyhough, Gershwin,
Hildegard of Bingen, Johnson, Ligeti,
McCormack, Penderecki,
Saariaho, Weirmeir,
Xenakis. And
Ysaye. The often
defined and
complex quotes
are juxtaposed
with aleatoric,
improvised and
graphic notation.
The intentional
avoidance of dogma
or "schools of
thought" blurs
boundaries,
disembodies truth,
promotes doubt
and is
extraordinarily
human.