Senior Recital

Matthew Feder, flute
Blake Ray, piano

March 26, 2022  2:00 pm  Nelson Music Room

Piece for solo flute  Jacques Ibert (1890-1962)

Sonata for flute and piano, Op. 94
I. Moderato  Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Hall of Ghosts for solo piccolo  Amanda Harberg (b. 1973)

Sicilienne et Burlesque, Op. 23  Alfredo Casella (1883-1947)

Special thanks to Carla Copeland-Burns for four years of fabulous guidance and instruction and to pianist Blake Ray.
Notes on the Program  
by Matthew Feder

Born in Paris in 1890, Jacques Ibert was one of the most successful composers of early 20th century music. He attended the Paris Conservatoire in 1910 and quickly his notoriety became known but was unfortunately interrupted by WWI. Following the war, Ibert continued to pursue his composition career and through the 1920s proceeded to compose some of his most successful works including Angelique. Ibert is known for being a bit eclectic in his work and we see this represented in that he never subscribes to one specific style, but blends many together to create his own unique works. In the 30s, Ibert shifted his attention from operatic and orchestral pieces to solo pieces and film music. At the height of this period, in 1936, he composed Piéce for Solo Flute. A near immediate success in the conservatory world, Piéce allows the individual playing it to make it his or her own. This individualistic style with odd rhythms and lax time I view as a great representation of the eclectic nature that Ibert loved through his life.

Sergei Prokofiev may be one of the best-known composers of the 20th century and Sonata for Flute (Violin) and Piano may be one of his best-known solo pieces. Prokofiev graduated from the St. Petersberg Conservatory in the early 20th century and began his career composing ballets but knew his love lay in writing operas. He has a rather intense theme through his work and this is seen across almost all of his mediums. Critics of his work sometimes argue that his pieces are too gloomy and not positive enough (especially during WWII), however, Prokofiev insisted that his music “should sound in such a way that people should jump in their seat.” His Sonata for Flute and Piano, written in 1943, is a great example of this phenomena. During this WWII era, Prokofiev was working on a score to a play about Ivan the Terrible. I believe that through the Sonata, we can note these quick changes from whimsical to intense passages as a reflection of Prokofiev’s experiences at the time.

Hall of Ghosts, by Amanda Harberg, is the only piece being performed today written by a composer who is still living. Harberg, a composer rising in popularity, attended Juilliard for her undergraduate and master’s degrees and has been teaching composition at Rutgers University for the last six years. Her compositions are often described as unique and lyrical and Hall of Ghosts is no exception. In 2020 Harberg produced Hall of Ghosts as a special thank you to the flute community who assisted her in a virtual flute orchestra project during the original COVID lockdown. She says that she was inspired to write the piece by Gudrun Hinze, a piccolo player who recorded with Harberg; as she watched the recording, she was stunned by the idea of the empty hall “filled with echoes and memories.” As you listen to this piece, think about these echoes and how they go throughout the piece, moving it forward or pulling it back.

Like Ibert, Alfredo Casella attended the Paris Conservatoire at the turn of the century, however, after his rise to fame, we see much of his work shift towards an American lens. Casella stated that much of his inspiration came from Debussy and the likes and so took this style and adapted with his Italian flair. By the 1920s, Casella immigrated to the US and became the conductor of the well known “Boston Pops.” While most of his work was orchestral, Casella produced several flute and piano pieces in the earlier parts of his career, prior to his position with the Pops. He produced Sicilienne et Burlesque in 1914, at the start of WWI and would not produce another piano and flute solo following the war. In the piece we have two parts; the sicilienne makes up the first half – a slow, gloomy, oddly-counted duet between the flute and the piano. This is contrasted by the burlesque, a quick, rhythmic duet in stable time. I view the stark contrast as a reflection of Casella’s experience of a calm Italian landscape quickly destabilized by the emerging war.