



DUKE MUSIC

Senior Recital

In Partial Fulfillment of Graduation with Distinction Outside of the Major

Sarah Tan, flute
Dr. Suzanne Polak, piano

March 27, 2022

2:00 pm

Nelson Music Room

Concerto for Flute and Orchestra
I. Allegro moderato

Carl Nielsen (1865-1931)

Sonata
Aria

Otar Taktakishvilli (1924-1989)

Danza de la Mariposa for Solo Flute

Valerie Coleman (b. 1970)

Intermission

Charanga for Solo Flute

Michael Colquhoun (1953-2016)

Spiral Lament

Ian Clark (b. 1964)

Sonata Appassionata for Solo Flute

Siegfried Karg-Elert (1877-1933)

Fantasia

Georges Hüe (1858-1954)

The Culture of Competition

The role of competition in music has been greatly debated since competitions first began taking place. Some strongly believe that competition limits the creative capacity of students and creates an end goal that doesn't allow the competitor to reach their full potential. Others have interviewed competitors who say that they enjoy it and feel that competitions boost morale and motivation. Throughout my experience as a competitor the past nine years, I can see how both sides of the argument have reason and can agree with points made from either side. In the end, however, as might be evident from how long I've competed for, I believe that competition provides a healthy way for musicians to grow and collaborate towards the goal of overall improvement in an increasingly globalized music community.

Music competition has been described as one-dimensional and standardizing in a "neoliberal education regime" by Sean Robert Powell, a professor at University of North Texas, who states that efforts from the students and teachers are turned towards the goal of competitive success instead of true musical improvement, which makes competitions one-dimensional and non-beneficial to the student. He also claims that the culture in music where competitive success is valued makes competitions compulsory. The compulsory nature of competing, he claims, is an example of neoliberal standardization where students are forced to perform and act a certain way to receive credit for their work. If a student and teacher were to believe that winning a competition were all that mattered, then Powell's points hold true in that the focus of playing would be to produce high quality performances in high stress environments. However, I doubt that most students and their teachers would truly believe this, and the ones that do would be a minority. In my experience, winning a competition has never been the end goal. Instead, my teachers and I throughout the years have all focused on how playing a certain piece would improve a certain technical skill or add new colors to my tone palette by forcing me to play, practice, and perform things outside of my comfort zone. Competing has also introduced me to extended techniques, something that I would not have chosen to do had I been selecting pieces for myself but now enjoy and play with frequently. Although competing frequently does prevent me from taking more time to work on basic skills such as scale exercises or etudes, the end result is always some form of improvement in my playing whether I win the competition or not.

Competing also gives solo musicians a chance to collaborate and connect with other solo musicians. Flute competitions are often held by regional, state, national, or international organizations, and having competitors come to one place to either compete or listen to the finalists provides soloists who may not otherwise interact with other musicians a chance to get a different understanding of the music all of them are playing. Additionally, competitions promote the rapid development of new repertoire by providing an environment for premiering them in an academic and social setting. Thus, not only performers but composers benefit from competitions. The Paris Conservatory has been requiring specific pieces for end-of-year exams since the 1900s, and through this has contributed to the increase in repertoire and recognition for composers. The National Flute Association (NFA) in the United States has followed the example set by the Paris Conservatory and commissions rising composers each year to create a piece specific for their solo competitions. Since the 1980s, the NFA has promoted the production of over 80 new, often award-winning pieces. National organizations and conservatories can continue to spread different styles of performance, and promote collaboration among a diverse group of composers and competitors.

Overall, competition in music will continue to be controversial because it can affect students negatively but can also help students equally. In the end, the goal that the competitor is reaching towards should be one of self-improvement and opportunity to learn rather than winning every competition, which I believe can help alleviate the negatives of music competition. In my experience, competing has been an extremely positive experience, even when stressful, still pushed me to become a better player. The pieces that I describe in the rest of this essay showcase some of what I have learned from each piece as I prepared to compete with them throughout my four years at Duke. Competitions that I recorded or performed the following pieces for include the Duke Concerto Competition, the Mid-Atlantic Flute Association competition, the Raleigh Area Flute Association competition, the Central Ohio Flute Association competition, the South Carolina Flute Association and the National Flute Association.

Concerto for Flute and Orchestra, mvmt 1. *Allegro Moderato* Carl Nielsen

Carl Nielsen's flute concerto was written for Holger Gilbert-Jespersen, who was the flutist of the Copenhagen Wind Quintet in 1926 when the piece was written. Nielsen had originally been inspired when he heard the quintet rehearsing Mozart's pieces in preparation for an upcoming concert, and wrote themes and variations for the group. He had wanted to write concertos for each member of the quintet, but only completed a flute and clarinet concerto before passing due to ill health. The flute concerto is neoclassical and atonal in typical modern fashion, but is still well suited to Gilbert-Jespersen who was trained under respected French flutist and composer Philippe Gaubert, who taught the French style of playing. Thus, the piece is modern yet airy and light in typical French style for the time. The contrast between composition and intended performer complicates the interpretation of the piece. The first movement is reminiscent of a chamber piece, not dissimilar from the quintet that inspired Nielsen to write the piece, alternating in conversation between the solo flute and members of the orchestra such as clarinet, bassoon, and surprisingly bass trombone. When the piece is played with piano, the piano imitates the clarinet, bassoon, and bass trombone through articulation and octave range. The combination of colors from the accompaniment is mixed into the flute solo, but the flute doesn't necessarily follow in response. Lyrical and airy sections reminiscent of the French style are interspersed between aggressive and exciting passages inspired by neoclassicism and modernity. For competition, creating a storyline that connects such differences while still maintaining the style and intention of Nielsen is a challenge.

Sonata, *Aria*, Otar Taktakishvili

Otar Taktakishvili was born in Georgia and rose to fame as a young student for composing the official anthem for Georgia. He was an accomplished composer, teacher, artistic director, and conductor. He also achieved political recognition from the USSR and the Lenin Prize in 1982, which had previously been given to Sergei Prokofiev and Dmitri Shostakovich among others. Taktakishvili's music was primarily vocal, and he drew heavily from traditional Georgian folk music while steadily rejecting Western trends such as the twelve-tone system. For this, he was much less censured than his composer counterparts in the USSR and enjoyed political freedom to compose what he wanted. His Sonata for flute and piano relies heavily on vocal folk music, especially movement two, titled *Aria*. The movement begins with a simple melody that keeps to a small range and refrains from heavy ornamentation as does the accompaniment.

Danza de la Mariposa, Valerie Coleman

Valerie Coleman is an American composer born in Louisville, Kentucky. Among her many achievements, including being a Grammy nominated performer, creating the wind quintet Imani Winds, and composing numerous commissioned pieces, her most important work is in breaking down the cultural and social barriers in classical music. Coleman's works are inspired by her knowledge and fascination with cultures that have traditionally been excluded from the classical music field. Her position as a contemporary African American female composer gives her a unique position from which she can draw experiences from and connect with people through her musical compositions. *Danza de la Mariposa* depicts the flight of butterflies across Peru and Argentina. In the beginning of the piece, the listener can imagine butterflies fluttering over flowers before they begin their journey across the continent. Then, Coleman takes the butterflies over Peru as heard in the style of traditional Yaravi, characterized by a sorrowful yet beautiful melody. Following Peru comes Argentina, where using syncopation and extended techniques allows the listener to tango with the butterflies. In this piece, maintaining the lightness and fluttering of butterfly wings throughout the piece can be difficult when using syncopation and extended techniques that can easily sound heavy.

Charanga, Michael Colquhoun

Charanga by Michael Colquhoun was inspired by charanga as a type of salsa dance within the Hispanic American urban dance music category. The music is heavily influenced by traditional African and Cuban music, both of which use a wide and unique variety of percussion instruments. Charanga is different from other styles of dance music because it features a solo flutist over the rest of the percussion. Colquhoun drew most of his inspiration from the dance music, but was also influenced by jazz. In Charanga, the solo flutist combines percussive sounds through extended techniques, jazzy interjections, and solo flute melodies into one comprehensive piece. The piece also requires an extended technique where the player sings one melody while playing another, which imitates a solo flute overlaying a background melody common in charanga dance music. The rapid transitions between each technique and regular playing requires slow practice and concentration.

Spiral Lament, Ian Clark

Spiral Lament by Ian Clark was commissioned by Hannah Money, who wanted a piece based on her giant African Snails. African Snails are an invasive species in the United States and can eat an enormous variety of plants, making them especially damaging to the environment. Other than that, they can grow to be the size of a teacup dog. Ian Clark was inspired by the foreignness of the creature and somewhat strange and alienness of the way it looked and moved after he got over his initial queasiness from thinking and looking at the animal. He mentions in his notes for the piece that “beyond fear there is fascination, discovery, and a different space.” This realization is what Ian Clark portrays through Spiral Lament, using extended techniques to produce a lamenting but awe-inspiring piece. The extended techniques involve new fingerings to produce “in-between” notes that don’t fit on the twelve-tone scale.

Sonata Appassionata, Sigfrid Karg-Elert

Sigfrid Karg-Elert’s flute compositions are well known to flutists, but to the rest of the music world is best known for his works for organ and harmonium. His works for flute demonstrate the influence of these instruments, as well as the influence of Edvard Grieg, August Reinhard, and Carl Bartuzat. Carl Bartuzat was a flutist that Karg-Elert befriended and then proceeded to write many flute pieces for during World War I. Karg-Elert was also very active in orchestras and bands, and the voices of many instruments make their way into solo pieces for flute and piano such as the Sonata Appassionata. The piece begins with a conversation between two voices, both played by the flutist who must express the difference by using rapid changes in tone color. The motif heard at the beginning reappears throughout the rest of the piece. The second part of the piece is played more expressively and freely than the introduction. The rapid change is likely influenced by Karg-Elert’s familiarity with the organ or harmonium which can change between voices very quickly. The piece ends with a similar voicing pattern of the beginning, where the flutist must show a difference in voices within a small range through tonal expression.

Fantasie for Flute and Piano, Georges Hüe

Georges Hüe was a prolific French composer best known for his operas and dedication to romanticism along with his refusal to follow increasingly realist styles of the time. His music was influenced by Eastern music from his own travels, and his Fantasie for flute and piano, which has since been expanded for orchestra, demonstrates the influence of vocal and Eastern music. The piece begins with a *lento* section that shows off the capabilities of the modern Boehm flute using a huge range of dynamics and octaves. It is followed by beautiful lyrical melodies based on the Eastern music he had been exposed to, and then technical passages where the soloist and accompanist converse. Fantasie was dedicated to Paul Taffanel, who was a flute professor at the Paris Conservatory, and requires a wide range of tone colors and dynamic contrast, so much so that the piece was designated as the competition piece for the end-of-year exams in 1913.