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Final DMA Recital Prospectus
Stony Brook University
Spring 2018

Bug / **Bruno Mantovani** (b. 1974)

Vier Stücke / **Alban Berg** (1885 – 1935)

Sonata / **Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco** (1895 - 1968)

Concerto / **Kalevi Aho** (b. 1949)

THE MARGINS OF THE CLARINET

The four works presented in this recital may seem unrelated. Each composition was conceived in a different place and time, and each is in a genre of its own. Presented in order of scope, this prospectus will explore the pieces to reveal the common thread linking them together.

Director of the Paris Conservatory since 2010, Bruno Mantovani has written a considerable amount for woodwinds, although his music is rarely performed. The recital begins with his solo clarinet work, *Bug*. In a short note on his website, Bruno Mantovani explains *Bug* as a musical metaphor for the Year 2000, or Y2K, problem. I have written about the theory of this piece, and the full article will be published in the National Association of College Wind and Percussion Instructors Journal in the Fall of 2018. Surprisingly, my essay is the first time anyone besides Mantovani has written about *Bug* in any context. My analysis reveals the way in which

Mantovani encrypts conflict into the formal structure of the work, effectively imitating the Y2K bug itself, and relating the piece to the broader Y2K societal dilemma. In fact, the emphasis on conflict is so deeply rooted into the thematic content, it is possible to analyze the piece in sonata form. In this prospectus, however, I will focus on the subject of the work and programmatic elements in the music.

The first page of the score is evocative of computer sounds, placing the listener inside of a computer. The demands of the score are somewhat unhuman; the incredibly fast tempo markings, precise and extremely rapid articulation, and constant polarized dynamic changes on the level of the millisecond demand incredible patience in preparation. The *bisbigliando* effect (Italian, literally: whispering, used to notate a timbral/color trill) along with the (albeit limited) usage of microtones helps to remove the listener from the world of twelve equitable divisions of the octave, to which a computer is not limited.

The piece reaches a climax halfway through the final page of the score, with the loudest dynamic of the work, *ffff*, on the highest note of the piece, with a growling effect not used until this special moment. With only a few lines of music remaining, it is not visually apparent, but this is the temporal midpoint of the piece. To me, this moment represents midnight, on the last day of December, in 1999.

The music is markedly different from this point on, using mostly long-tones. It seems as if humanity is waiting to find out what happened. It is the year 2000 now. Are our airports alright? What damage has been done? From the marking *sans nervosité* until the end of the work, we

hear the quietest dynamics and the vast majority of the microtones. The music here seems more introverted and disoriented as people begin to realize that everything is alright. The final note, short, accented, and the only note with the marking *bruit de clé* (key noise), seems like a little introverted chuckle about all of the overreaction, a subtle but humorous conclusion.

The second piece on the program is Alban Berg's *Vier Stücke*, op. 5. Berg is known for bringing "humanity" to the atonal and twelve-tone methods of composition. He would come to learn the theory of Schoenberg, but was never afraid to break the rules to achieve his desired result. The *Vier Stücke* are unusual in his output. Written in 1913, they are very short, with the longest being only 20 measures. Many Romantic composers, including Beethoven, Brahms, Schubert, Schumann, and Chopin composed miniatures. Later, Debussy, Ravel, Bartok, and all of the composers of the Second Viennese School would continue in this genre. At first, Berg thought this would be the only possible way to write in an atonal style, but he would soon disprove this with his own opera, *Wozzeck*, composed between 1914-22. The *Vier Stücke* are an example of aphoristic composition, as they tend to avoid obvious melodic development or repetition, providing a stark contrast to the large formal structures of the late romantic era.

Analyses of the *Vier Stücke* vary wildly. Some assert the work as the most atonal of Berg's output, while others argue that the piece is actually tonal at times, and even attempt to show functional harmonic progressions. For example, the third piece can be analyzed in Bb, with an augmented triad as tonic to purposely blur the tonality. The opening thirds are strikingly reminiscent of Schoenberg's *Sechs kleine Klavierstücke*, op. 19, no. 2 (1911), also exactly 9 measures and with opening major thirds which are usually avoided in this overtness, especially

by Schoenberg. In fact, in my own listening, it has forced me to reconsider what a major third should sound like outside of the context of tonality.

Berg had little formal music education before he became a student of Arnold Schoenberg in October 1904. After Schoenberg moved to Berlin in 1911, he communicated often with Berg, especially to tend to his needs in Vienna. Berg was desperate to please his teacher but rarely succeeded. In fact, the *Vier Stücke* may have contributed to Schoenberg's general disapproval. Berg's previous work, *Fünf Orchesterlieder nach Ansichtkartentexten von Peter Altenberg*, op. 4, are similar in length to the clarinet pieces. Reacting to both, Schoenberg demanded Berg write on a larger scale and expressed his dislike of both works. Berg's *Drei Orchesterstücke*, op. 6 is a clear reaction to this criticism, perhaps also inspired by Schoenberg's *Fünf Orchesterstücke*, op. 16.

In 1915, communication ceased between the two for a while after a personal rift. It took years to recover the relationship, and was painful, as Schoenberg's other student Anton Webern was allowed to address his teacher by the familiar, more equal "you" form, *du*. Berg was not offered this privilege until years later. Schoenberg even dedicated his *Violin Concerto* to Webern. While Berg dedicated four works to his teacher, including the *Vier Stücke*, Schoenberg never returned the favor. Studying with Arnold Schoenberg would become problematic for him later in life, as antisemitism rose in Germany and also in Vienna. Eventually, Berg's work was placed on the Nazi list of degenerate music (*entartete Musik*).

Closing the first half of the program is Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Clarinet Sonata*. Called the Jewish-Italian Brahms, Castelnuovo-Tedesco's family history was shaped by centuries of systemic European anti-Semitism. Following the Spanish Inquisition, the Alhambra Decree of 1492 forced his father's family line out of Spain for being Jewish. They moved to Tuscany.

A few hundred years later, Castelnuovo-Tedesco was one of the very few Jewish composers who actively wrote during the fascist Italian regime. Jewish people in Italy lost their citizenship and their jobs. They were prohibited from publishing and studying. Even before these atrocious laws went into effect, Castelnuovo-Tedesco was banned from the radio and live performances of his music were cancelled.

In January of 1938, Castelnuovo-Tedesco felt the effects of these discriminatory policies firsthand when a performance of his *Second Violin Concerto (I profeti)*, based on traditional Hebrew melodies and intended as a celebration of his Jewish origins, was cancelled. The work, which was commissioned by Jascha Heifetz in 1931, has three movements subtitled "Isaiah," "Jeremiah," and "Elijah," after the ancient Hebrew prophets. The composer called the concerto "the most important... and I believe the most significant among my works of Jewish inspiration."

Despite his marginalization, it wasn't until his young children were banned from attending school in the fall of 1938 that the Italian Racial Laws had finally become untenable and convinced him that he needed to leave his home country. He travelled to Switzerland, where he could communicate with his friends Arturo Toscanini, Jascha Heifetz, and Albert Spalding without fear of interception by the Italian government. They supported his move. Although it

was very difficult for Jewish people at the time, it was important to Castelnuovo-Tedesco to leave Italy legally. Heifetz, by then an American citizen, sponsored his move to the USA, and provided an affidavit promising him work. With no plans to return, Castelnuovo-Tedesco bought a round-trip ticket and finally left in 1939, right before WWII. After a short amount of time in New York, he left for Beverly Hills.

One year after he arrived in America, he learned of his mother's passing, who had kept her suffering a secret from him. She knew he would want to visit her in Italy, and that it would be dangerous to come back. On the day that he received the telegram, he also received a phone call from Heifetz offering him a job with MGM studios as a film composer. Castelnuovo-Tedesco accepted, and saw it as the final gift from his mother.

He contributed to hundreds of films for MGM and other studios including Columbia, Universal, Warner Brothers, 20th-Century Fox, and CBS. His skills were valued in Hollywood because he was able to compose very quickly, and because of his excellent ears, he did not need to compose at the piano.

After the war, Castelnuovo-Tedesco received an offer from the Italian government to serve as the director of the conservatory of his choice (Naples or Rome). He was pleased by the offer as a symbol of reconciliation, but ultimately decided to stay in America, and eventually, to become an American citizen.

As a composer, he is difficult to place. Often attributed many labels, including impressionist, neo-classicist, and melodically neo-romantic, he personally disliked categorization. As a student of composition, he wanted to study the music of Debussy, but his initial teacher would not allow it. He eventually switched composition teachers and began studying with Ildebrando Pizzetti, a member of the "Generation of 1880" along with Ottorino Respighi, Gian Francesco Malipiero, and Alfredo Casella. These composers were among the first Italians in some time whose primary contributions were not in opera. Pizzetti supported Castelnuovo-Tedesco's study of impressionism and trained him considerably in counterpoint. This training proved valuable. A defining feature of Castelnuovo-Tedesco's work is the brilliant ways in which he weaves different melodies together, and the *Clarinet Sonata* is a great example of this.

Today, he is mostly remembered for his guitar music, although he was also one of the contributing composers for Nathaniel Shilkret's collaborative project, the *Genesis Suite*. Shilkret was a colleague at MGM studios, and also a talented clarinetist, having played in both the New York Philharmonic and Metropolitan Opera Orchestra before moving to Hollywood to focus on composing. Each of seven composers, Arnold Schoenberg, Nathaniel Shilkret, Alexandre Tansman, Darius Milhaud, Ernst Toch, Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, and Igor Stravinsky, wrote one movement (listed in order). Notably, all seven of these composers had left Europe for the US and most were Jewish. This work is also significant for bringing Schoenberg and Stravinsky together in the context of one piece, because although they lived a few miles apart from each other in Los Angeles, they did not get along.

Castelnuovo-Tedesco wrote two chamber pieces for clarinet, (the *Sonata*, op. 128, and also the *Pastorale and Rondo* for Clarinet, Violin, Cello, and Piano) and also works for all of the other woodwind instruments. It is possible that the *Pastorale and Rondo* was requested by a group of musicians in Los Angeles looking for a companion piece to Messiaen's *Quatuor Pour la Fin du Temps* or Hindemith's *Quartet* using the same instrumentation. Written in 1958, it went decades without being published, but today it is available from Ricordi. The autograph manuscript exists at UCLA.

There is no information regarding any kind of commission or dedication for the clarinet works, although Castelnuovo-Tedesco must have been aware of the popularity of the clarinet in the United States in the 1940s, due to Benny Goodman's commissioning of Copland, Milhaud, Hindemith, and Bartok. He also had a special respect for the clarinet because of Mozart and Brahms, and as a pianist, had performed Brahms' clarinet sonatas himself. He mentions in his writings that his *Clarinet Sonata* was the longest ever written, though Reger's are probably longer.

Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Sonata*, Op. 128, was written 1944-45, but not published until 1977. As such, it was not often performed because the music was not available. As the work has now been consistently published for more than forty years, it is time to reconsider this piece for more regular performance. It is a stunning work, especially in its romantic melodies. Outside of this romanticism, however, the work is classical in structure. It is a four-movement work, with a sonata form used in the first movement as expected, and an energetic rondo for the fourth. Interspersed with occasional extended harmonies (perhaps influenced by jazz), and aesthetically

impressionistic, glimmering piano passages, the work has a lot to offer, and frankly, should be in the standard repertoire today.

The final work on the program, occupying the second half, is Finnish composer Kalevi Aho's *Concerto*. With a history and culture shaped by its peripheral geographical location in the outermost reaches of northern Europe, Finland separates the East from the West. Over time, it has been annexed to Sweden, ceded to Russia, and finally independent, joining the European Union in 1995. Here in the United States, we commonly include the country within our broader understanding of Scandinavia, however, this is not technically correct. Although the country is on the Scandinavian peninsula (unlike Denmark), the Finnish language is not mutually intelligible with the other main languages in the region, including Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian, which form the Scandinavian dialect continuum.

Finnish is a Uralic language, or more specifically, Finno-Ugric, with similarities to Estonian and Hungarian, but not similar to the Germanic languages or Russian. There are very few similarities to English, and as such, it would be a significant endeavor for a native English speaker to learn Finnish. There are more vowels than consonants, and with 15 grammatical cases for nouns and adjectives, there is no need for prepositions. According to the Finnish constitution, Finnish and Swedish are the official languages, though only about five percent of the Finnish people speak Swedish. Citizens have the right to communicate in either language with government agencies. In other Nordic countries, Finns have the right to speak their native tongue with any official agencies, despite the language being significantly different.

There is still some disagreement on the origin of the Finnish people. Linguists used to draw connections to the Volga Bend region in Russia because of Samoyedic (a family of languages spoken around the Ural mountains) remnants in the language. Genetic research, however, has since revealed that the Finnish DNA is actually much more European.

Finland is so connected to Europe, and yet still separated. It is so close to the other Nordic countries, especially Sweden (in fact, for centuries roads have been established in the winter between the islands of Sweden and Finland, as the ice can carry cars), and yet there is a significant language barrier. So close to Russia, and yet a complicated history and another language barrier exists there as well. Perhaps this geography, culture, and language can help to explain the recent proliferation of unique and compelling clarinet output from the region.

Any clarinetist alive today should be paying attention to what is going on in Finland. Almost all of the Finnish music written for the clarinet dates from the past two or three decades. This is curious, as the clarinet has been an established solo instrument for well over two centuries. At least some of the impetus for this recent outflux of Finnish clarinet literature can be traced to the outstanding Finnish clarinetist Kari Kriikku (b. 1960), capable of seemingly anything on the instrument. He is known for his performances from Crusell to Lindberg, Saariaho, and beyond, pushing the boundaries of what is possible on the clarinet, and bringing contemporary Finnish work for the clarinet to an international audience. Finnish composers Kimmo Hakola, Jouni Kaipainen, Magnus Lindberg, Uljas Pulkkis, Kaija Saariaho, and Jukka Tiensuu have all written works for him.

It was not Kriiku, however, who inspired Kalevi Aho's *Clarinet Concerto*, setting Aho's work apart from other recent Finnish clarinet concerti. Rather, it was the young Swedish clarinetist Martin Fröst who commissioned the work after winning the prestigious Borletti-Buitoni Award in 2003. When they met in 2004, Fröst showed Aho his capabilities on the instrument, and as such, the work has his voice unmistakably engraved in the pages.

Finnish conductor Osmo Vänskä premiered the work in 2006 with the BBC Symphony Orchestra in London. Interestingly, Vänskä began his career as a clarinetist, serving as co-principal of the Helsinki Philharmonic for several years. He actively promoted Aho's work while serving as conductor of the Lahti Symphony Orchestra, and as a clarinetist even performed the premiere of Aho's virtuosic *Clarinet Quintet*, which is available in recorded form.

The through-composed *Concerto* begins as a showpiece displaying the amazing technical capability of the instrument. Much like Magnus Lindberg, Aho does not shy away from writing forceful orchestrations behind the soloist, and accomplishes this in the first movement by keeping the note values in the orchestra short. However, it is not long before the storm subsides within the first movement and beautiful, soulful melodies emerge. It is in the second movement cadenza where Martin Fröst's influence can be heard most clearly, alternating agile lines with ominous tremolos as if they were opposing characters in a drama. The third movement is a real madcap and the climax of the concerto, with a time signature change in almost every measure, break-neck tempo, and "scales" that almost never have the expected notes. The slow fourth movement offers a much-needed reprieve, and the fifth movement "Epilogue" reveals the

multiphonic capabilities of the clarinet as the concerto fades away, having conjured almost every sound imaginable from the instrument.

Besides his impressive large-scale output of seventeen symphonies, twenty-nine concerti, and five operas, Aho is known as an assiduous writer, with well over 500 essays on music. His music deserves more recognition outside of Finland, and although the *Clarinet Concerto* is a virtuosic work (and despite the publishing issues, including a strange orientation in the printing of the cadenza, and significant errors in the fifth movement multiphonic fingerings) it should be considered for more regular performance. The piano reduction works exceptionally well, although there is no evidence that it has ever been performed before now. In fact, besides Martin Fröst, there is no evidence that anyone else has ever performed the *Concerto* with orchestra either.

These four pieces, for one reason or another, are on the fringe of the clarinet repertoire. In addition, several of the composers have found themselves on the fringe of society. Mantovani, although holding a high-profile position, is rarely performed due to the extreme technical difficulty of his work. Berg, shunned by his own beloved teacher, eventually had his music banned by the Nazi government. Marginalized, Castelnuovo-Tedesco's entire family history exemplifies systemic European anti-Semitism. Outshined by Lindberg and Saariaho internationally, Aho's music is just as famous within Finland. Unfortunately, a decade has passed and his behemoth *Clarinet Concerto* seems to have gone by unnoticed. It is not my argument that all of these works should be canonized in the clarinet repertoire (although I would argue that for

Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Sonata*). Rather, it is to advocate for these brilliant pieces to be remembered, studied, and at minimum, performed more often.

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