

*The
Boise State College
Fine Arts Series
1970-71*

French Sonatas

ROBERT SOËTENS, *violinist*
MINKA ROUSTCHEVA, *pianist*

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30, 1970 8 p.m.
BOISE STATE COLLEGE MUSIC AUDITORIUM

- I. SONATA Cesar Franck**
 for Violin and Piano (1822-1890)
 (to Eugene Ysaye)

Allegretto ben moderato
 Allegro
 Recitativo, con fantasia
 Allegretto

- II. SONATA 2 Darius Milhaud**
 for Violin and Piano (Né in 1892)
 ("Pour André Gide")
 Pastoral - Très vif - Très Lent - Vif

INTERMISSION

- III. GASPARD de la NUIT Maurice Ravel**
 for Piano (1875-1937)

Ondine - Le Givert - Scarbo

- IV. SONATA Claude Debussy**
 for Violin and Piano (1862-1918)

Allegro - Intermezzo - Finale

ROBERT SOËTENS

The French violinist Robert Soëtens remains to this day the authentic and direct heir of the famous Franco-Belgian school for violin, which is more than a century old.

Born in France to Belgian parents who were professional musicians trained at the royal conservatories of Liege and Brussels, Robert Soëtens was brought into contact, as a child, with the great violinist, Eugene Ysaye, and became his devoted disciple.

Mr. Soëtens' musical education was formed in Paris, where he received first prize for violin at the Conservatoire National Supérieur, and studied for several years with the celebrated violin teacher, Lucien Capet.

Robert Soëtens has concertized with the leading orchestras of Paris: The Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, the Concerts Colonne, Lamoureux, Pasdeloup and the Orchestre National de la RTF. He has performed steadily during his long career with the Philharmonic of Berlin, with the Concertgebouw of Amsterdam, with the B.B.C. in London, with the orchestra of Mozarteum at Salzburg, and with all the four continents: Europe, Africa, North and South America and Asia.

Robert Soëtens has at one time or another touched the lives of some of the "greats" of all time - he was the friend and interpreter of Ravel, Albert Roussel, Bartok, Enesco and other celebrated composers of the century, notably the great Russian musician, Serge Prokofieff. He toured Europe with Prokofieff in 10 concerts in programs for violin and piano, and it was for him that Prokofieff wrote his 2nd Concerto in G Minor for violin and orchestra, which Mr. Soëtens first performed in Madrid in 1935 and played for the first time in Paris under Charles Munch, for the first time in London under Prokofieff himself, in Amsterdam with Markevitch and in Berlin with Solti.

It was also to Soëtens that the late Filip Lazar dedicated his Suite for violin.

MINKA ROUSTCHEVA

Minka Roustcheva, pianist, was born in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, and completed the cycle of musical studies at the Academy in Sofia in 1960.

She then studied in Paris with Marcel Ciampi and Suzanne Roche, and later at the Marquerite Long Academy, where she studied orchestra with Tony Aubin and interpretation with Marguerite Long herself. She took the coveted first prize at the Academy, with the title of Concert Pianist, in 1963.

Minka Roustcheva's long list of prizes in international competition include the Warsaw (1957), the Geneva (1962), the "Viotti" at Vercelli, Italy (1963), the "Marguerite Long" in Paris (1964), and the "Vianna de Motta" at Lisbon.

Miss Roustcheva is a frequent soloist with the orchestras of Sofia and the ORTF in Paris and has appeared regularly in recital and as soloist with orchestras and chamber music groups in France, Bulgaria, Turkey, Yugoslavia, and other countries throughout Europe.

MUSIC AND POETRY OF FRANCE

These works have been selected because of their relation to great French writers of the same epoch. Either composers have been inspired by the literary works, or a writer has been inspired by the music.

The program notes seek to show the relationship between compositions on the program and the literary works which they inspired. The comments were written by Mr. Robert Soëtens, whose musical roots were from this creative epoch. It was Soëtens' master, Eugène Ysaÿe, the then famed violinist, who promoted Frank, Debussy, and other contemporary composers.

This was the period of Symbolism, Impressionism, and other forms of artistic expression, extremely rich and creative, which radiated from Paris from the late nineteenth century until the year 1914.

SONATA (To Eugène Ysaÿe)—CESAR FRANCK

Music played a passionate and consistent role in the emotional life of Marcel Proust. It became an important factor in the construction of his novels.

Proust was an intent follower of the composers of the time—Saint Saëns, Fauré, Debussy, Franck and his disciple Vincent D'Indy.

In his novel, "Remembrances of Things Past," the author invents names for the fictional characters symbolizing the real people mentioned and portrayed in his text. Thus, "Elstir," became a generalization for Impressionism and of impressionist artists.

In his novel "Vinteuil," a character is portrayed as a generalization of all the composers. Their sonatas for violin and piano, to which Proust listened frequently at concerts or in fashionable Parisian salons, are all mentioned by him as the imaginary and symbolic "Sonate de Vinteuil."

It seems obvious that the personality of Franck and his Sonata have been important elements in the creative thought of Proust.

Proust revealed to intimate friends that the most deeply felt model for "Vinteuil" had been Franck's Sonata. If one considers the characteristics attributed to "Vinteuil"—nobility, alternating humility and innocent vanity, a situation at once that of a composer of genius, unique, yet unrecognized until his death, they all seem to bring to mind César Franck.

Regarding the Sonata (composed in 1886, near the end of Franck's life), to whose contemplative and refined third movement Proust listened to endlessly, we could quote his own lines:

"When the vision of the universe is modified, purified. . . when it becomes more adapted to the memory of the inner fatherland, it is only natural that this phenomenon be translated by a

general alteration of sound, among musicians, and of colours among painters. . . One could guess it was a matter of transposition, by order of sonority, of the concept of depth."

SONATA 2—DARIUS MILHAUD

The Sonata number two for violin and piano by Darius Milhaud is a youthful work completed in 1917.

It is profoundly inspired by André Gide's book: "Fruits of the Earth." Written in 1897, shocking contemporary taste and ignored by the critics, this work initially met with no success. Its real influence was not manifested until ten to fifteen years later, first of all among the intellectual youth who seized it. They discovered at the same time other works of that writer, who became an idol for certain of them who became known as "gidiens".

Milhaud, also enthusiastic about this book, decided to create a musical piece inspired by "Fruits of the Earth". This was his Second Sonata for Violin and Piano, dedicated: "To Mr. André Gide."

The score expresses the intense song of love, of freedom and life, and the thrilling fervour which runs through the literary work.

The starting pasturale evokes that penetration of nature whose delightful landscapes were described by Gide: "I knew the spring, the smell of earth, the sprouting of grass in the fields, the morning mists over the river and the dew of evening over the prairies."

The second movement of the Sonata carries along to a light quick rhythm, as in a Mediterranean dance.

The third, calm and devout, leads our minds towards these lines of Gide, written on the Monte Pincio, in Rome: "Through this huge tunnel of trees one could believe that light was flowing and that its golden foam spangled the branches among streams of sun rays..."

The finale, full of joy, with rustic resonances, blithely ends a work overflowing with youth, sun and life, in which the Mediterranean spirit of the young provincial musician is successfully joined with that of the poet.

Thirty years later, in 1927, Gide was to write in a retrospective prologue: "The Fruits of the Earth is the book of a convalescent. There is in its lyricism, the excess of an embrace given to life by somebody who had come close to losing it." It is this, too, that Milhaud tells us in his sonorous language.

GASPARD DE LA NUIT—MAURICE RAVEL

Revel was inspired by the "Three Prose Poems" of Aloysius Bertrand, a romantic writer whose true stature was long ignored. However, thanks to Beaudelaire, whose admiration singled out the older poet for acclaim, the

renown of Aloysius Bertrand, author of the first and most beautiful prose poems in the French language, has continued to increase throughout the years. Born in Italy in 1801, Bertrand died in Paris in 1841, having experienced throughout his brief life nothing but misery, suffering and illness.

Bertrand's work, *Gaspard of the Night*, as modest as was its author, comprises six volumes, each containing several short prose poems which are concentrated, evocative and striking:

Book one: The Flemish School

Book two: Old Paris

Book three: Night and its Enchantments

Book four: Chronicles

Book five: Spain and Italy

Book six: Sylvia (collection of poetical works) plus a dozen or so of separate pieces.

Those which inspired Ravel are *Ondine* from *Night and its Enchantments*, *The Gallows*, and *Scarbo* from the *Separate Pieces*.

The element of Fire plays a considerable role in *Gaspard of the Night*, Scarbo, a diabolical personage imagined by the author as a hunchbacked deformed gnome, is related to those creatures of a subtle world portrayed in so many of the paintings of Breughel and Jerome Bosch. Scarbo is the bad lot who attaches himself to the tortured soul of the poet. He is the forger who in the obscure caverns of the soul mints the false currency of the baser passions - compulsions, obsession with gold, thirst for the void and the unknown bounding along their course in the illusive and capricious pirouettes of the dwarf. Here, in the element Fire, together with *Ondine*, the Poem of Water so magically translated by Ravel, using the piano technique which he revived in the *Jeux d'Eau* (Playing Waters) of 1901, is that fluid, brilliant virtuosity of Chopin and Liszt, with which Ravel seems to take on the shimmering sonorities of Impressionist color.

The Gallows let us cite Bertrand himself: "It is the hell which tolls at the city wall, below the horizon, and the corpse of a hanged man reddened by the setting sun."

The three extracts chosen by Ravel, are veritable musical etchings. Those who listen to them without concern for the pages which inspired them and which the composer wished to reproduce integrally, can have no more than a far too rudimentary comprehension of his music.

Here the world of sound transcends that of tragic or fantastic poetry. The magic of Ravel, inspired by the magical Poet, unveils together a glimpse of that impenetrable mystery which is within each man.

SONATA—CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Claude Debussy, called by D'Annunzio, Claude of France, is without doubt, the musician who is most closely connected with poetry. Among the many poets who inspired him and with whom Debussy harmonized his texts we find five centuries back Charles of Orleans and Francois Villon, from the seventeenth century: Tristan L'Hermite; from the nineteenth century: Lamartine, Theodore De Banville, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mallarme', Pierre Louys, D'Annunzio, Maeterlink.

This enumeration illustrates the continued poetic inspiration of Debussy. His pure music, not inspired by texts, remains nonetheless poetry. His work for piano: the "Twenty-four Preludes", the "Estampes", the "Images" bear, in the front pages, titles which are ideally suggested such as, "Gardens in the Rain", "The wind in the plain", "sounds and perfumes spin in the evening air", etc. Similar titles appear in his symphonic works.

Debussy is said to be the sole discoverer of Impressionistic music. He was the musician who prompted the rise of a new world of sound in a sudden reaction against earlier and contemporary music, such as neo-romantic, the sentimental, the traditional and the material.

In Debussy, music signifies color and poetry, and, inversely, poetry and color are music...Not in the descriptive sense as in a landscape, but in the very essence of the inspiring ideas, in the impressions and sensations which the spirit evokes and sounds are to suggest.

In 1887, with "Spleen" and "Green", the "The shadow of trees on the river", "Tears rain in my heart" (forgotten arietti by Verlaine) as in 1890, with "Claire de Lune" (Moon light), Debussy dematerializes music. His world of sound becomes aethereal, intangible, all suggestion and vibrations: within the atmosphere of a brave new world, he, then, is the inventor, the genial creator of musical impressionism.

The Sonata for violin and piano (1917) is his last finished piece. It seems to synthesize all the works of the master, as though Debussy, having a presentiment of his approaching death (1918), wished to grasp a vision of the past. Thirteen minutes of music evoke Debussy's world: the Impressionistic touch, the Isle de France, the oriental evocations, the eccentric humor, the Golliwog's Cake Walk of 1900, everything is there, through suggestions lightly sketched in a spirit high, visionary and cosmic.

Here reigns the creative mind of the poet, in which music and poetry mingle.