2002-02-25

Faculty Concert: Bayla Keyes, violin, Robert Merfeld, piano

Boston University College of Fine Arts
School of Music

—presents—

FACULTY CONCERT

BAYLA KEYES, *violin*
ROBERT MERFELD, *piano*

Monday, February 25, 2002 at 8:00 p.m.
The Tsai Performance Center
685 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts

BAYLA KEYES, *violin*
ROBERT MERFELD, *piano*

Works for Violin and Piano by Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

Monday, February 25, 2002
8:00 p.m.

PROGRAM

Andante in A Major (1902)

Rhapsody No. 2 (1928)

lassú
friss

Sonata No. 2 (1922)

Molto moderato
Allegretto

—Intermission—

Rhapsody No. 1 (1928)

lassú
friss

Sonata No. 1 (1921)

Allegro appassionato
Adagio
Allegro molto

FROM THE ARTISTS

We would like to express our thanks and appreciation to Min-Sun Park for her enlightening notes for this evening's concert. By sheer coincidence, we found out that she is doing her D.M.A. thesis at Boston University on the very works we are performing on this program and managed to convince her to share the fruits of her research.

Our original intention was to present the complete published works for Bartók for violin and piano, but upon discovering the early (1903) Sonata in A minor, a sprawling, post-Lizstian half-hour long composition, we had to slightly re-define the project so that the concert's length would remain reasonable. Most likely Bartók himself would appreciate the omission of the early sonata. He was incensed that his piano quintet, from the same period, escaped the trash-bin, and the violin sonata is not dissimilar in scope and language.

In any case, we feel privileged to tackle this extraordinary body of literature; it is the work of one of the 20th century's great artists and human beings. Bartók was a man of true courage and uncompromising integrity. This was revealed both in his music and his stands against fascism. His music is consistently human, no matter how discordant. It runs the full gamut of the human condition from intellectual severity to comic burlesque and tipsiness. The first rhapsody and second sonata were among Bartók's favorite compositions and were on his program with Joseph Szigeti at the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. days after arriving here as a refugee in 1941.

—Bayla Keyes and Robert Merfeld

PROGRAM NOTES

Béla Bartók (1881-1945)—Hungarian composer, pianist, and ethnomusicologist—was born in Nagyszentmiklós, now a part of Rumania. Since his father was an amateur musician and his mother, Paula, a pianist, he was exposed quite early to music.

Throughout his career as both performer and composer, he wrote for and performed with some of the most prominent violinists of the time, including Imre Waldbauer, Jelly d'Arányi, Joseph Szigeti, and Zoltán Székely. As a student at the Budapest Academy, Bartók was writing in the Romantic style, heavily influenced by Liszt, Brahms, and Richard Strauss. This can clearly be heard in his compositions from that time, including the *Andante*, written in 1902 for violin and piano.

In 1904, however, Bartók discovered that the true folk music of Hungary was quite different from the popular gypsy style of Romantic "Hungarian" music. Through his research, he came to the conclusion that true folk music was created directly and unconsciously from the nature of the peasants and therefore contained no artifice, which aligned completely with his own personality. Consequently, folk music would influence Bartók's compositions for the remainder of his life, resulting in music that was much

The Violin Sonatas Nos. 1 and 2 are some of Bartók's most daring works. He wrote the two sonatas within a year of each other in 1921-22 and dedicated them to his friend d'Arányi, a brilliant Hungarian violinist and great-niece of Joachim. One of the most striking aspects of these works lies in the nearly total lack of shared thematic material between the violin and piano. Each instrument is portrayed idiomatically, and the full range of pitches, dynamics, sonorities and expressive capabilities of both instruments are exploited. Though the sonatas clearly show a number of influences, including the textures of Debussy and the expressionism of Schoenberg, the greatest influence is that of the folk music Bartók so admired. In these works, he was truly successful in integrating art music with folk music. Though they are some of the most complex examples of classical music and have been the subject of numerous analytical studies, they lack none of the earthy, primitive, and spontaneous qualities of the folk music Bartók studied. The folk influence is evident in the rhythmic and metric freedoms and the improvisational, variational treatment of the themes. They are some of his most difficult works for both the performe[illegible] and audience, but they were surprisingly well accepted when first wri[illegible] (despite the fistfight that broke out in the audience during one performance of the first sonata), and have since entered the standard violin/piano sonata repertory.

The first Sonata is based on the Classical three-movement sonata model, with a quasi-sonata-form first movement, slow second movement in a ternary form, and fast rondo third movement. The first movement begins with arpeggios suggestive of Debussy in the piano, on top of which floats the violin melody. Gradually the music intensifies to a section marked by *risoluto* block chords in the piano. Instead of developing the themes in the movement in a Beethovenian manner, Bartók brings back the themes in varied restatements, a technique derived form the folk idiom. The second movement opens with a *parlando rubato* passage for solo violin, followed by a series of parallel chords in the piano spanning the interval of a tritone. This interval becomes intensified in the middle section of the movement, when the piano and violin battle with repeated F-sharps in the piano and C's in the violin, a battle to be heightened by being repeated a step higher, and eventually resolving into a varied restatement of the first section. The third movement, after a stumbling (and falling) introduction in the piano, is a *tempo giusto* dance, full of energy and rhythmic drive. It is constantly accelerating, pulling back, and accelerating again until finally reaching its *vivacissimo* conclusion.

The second sonata uses a freer two-movement form reminiscent of the slow-fast *lassú-friss* form of the Liszt Hungarian Rhapsodies, with the first movement leading directly and unobtrusively into the second. The two movements are interconnected in many ways. The first movement is q[illegible] free and improvisational, often mournful and subdued, with occasion[illegible] outbursts from the two instruments. The second movement is again a *tempo giusto* finale. It contains examples of the play[illegible]ul and humorous aspects

of Bartók's personality, depicting not only the exuberant dances of the peasants, but at times the exaggerated stomping of a large peasant, or the staggering of a peasant who has had one too many drinks at the feast.

The two Violin Rhapsodies were written for more practical purposes than the Sonatas; they provided Bartók and his violinist partners with popular recital pieces for the less sophisticated audiences who were not ready to accept the Sonatas. The Rhapsodies, like the Sonatas, were written within a year of each other in 1928, and were dedicated to two of Bartók's recital partners, Szèkely and Szigeti. The Rhapsodies were later orchestrated by Bartók, and the first Rhapsody was also arranged for cello and piano. They marked Bartók's return to a more accessible, straightforward type of composition reminiscent of the earlier Hungarian folk works. The Rhapsodies are arrangements of folk dances (mostly Romanian) collected from peasant violinists by Bartók over the years and set in his own unique way; his percussive piano ostinati, complex rhythms and accents, and stark dissonances only add to the organic quality of the folk dances.

The Violin Rhapsodies both use two-part *lassú-friss* form of Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies. They are quite obviously virtuoso showpieces for the violin, and the piano is used in a more accompanimental capacity than in the Sonatas (though the piano parts can never be described as "easy", as Bartók wrote them for himself to play). The second Rhapsody makes more use of the piano as an equal partner to the violin, often providing not only rhythm and harmony, but also counterpoint to the violin's melody.

—Min-Sun Park

THE ARTISTS

Described as "a charismatic soloist of expressive generosity and technical elan," violinist **Bayla Keyes** is an ardent champion for a wide range of classical and contemporary repertoire. A seasoned performer on the international touring circuit, having played over one thousand concerts as a founding member of the Naumburg Award-winning Muir String Quartet, Ms. Keyes currently concertizes throughout America as recitalist, soloist with orchestras, and as a member of the contemporary music ensemble Boston Musica Viva and the acclaimed piano trio, Triple Helix. Recent concert highlights include the BankBos on Celebrity Series, Brandenburg Concerti with the Boston Chamber Music Society, the Fromm Series at Harvard University, Bargemusic and Joan Tower's Birthday Concert in Town Hall in New York City, solo recitals in Pittsburgh and Boston, a series of recitals presenting American works at Boston University, premieres of concertos by Bernard Hoffer, John Crawford, and Richard F[illegible]ger, and a recording of Michael Daugherty's "Lex," a dazzling

showcase for electronic violin. With degrees from Curtis Institute and Yale University and her first professional experience with Music from Marlboro, Chair of the String Department at Boston University and Ms. Keyes naturally extends her musical commitment to education; she is Artistic Director of the Interlochen Chamber Music Conference. Her piano trio, Triple Helix, is in residence at Wellesley College. Ms. Keyes has recorded for Video Artists International, Ecoclassics, CRI, Musical Heritage, EMI-France, Sony, Koch, Bridge, and New World Records. She plays a Gennarius Gagliano made in 1740.

Born in New York City, **Robert Merfeld** began his piano studies at an early age with Leonid Hambro. He graduated from the Oberlin Conservatory as a student of Emil Danenberg and received a Master's degree from the Juilliard School as a scholarship student of Beveridge Webster. While at Juilliard, he pursued art song accompaniment with Viennese tenor Hans Heinz and also worked in the studios of Jennie Tourel, Oscar Shumsky, and Leonard Rose.

Mr. Merfeld was a founding member of the Apple Hill Chamber Play with whom he toured nationally and internationally for over twenty years. He participates regularly in collaborative recitals throughout the United States with artists such as violinists Stanley Ritchie and Arnold Steinhardt, and vocalists Dawn Upshaw and Lucy Shelton. He has performed at Aspen, Ravinia, Caramoor, Marlboro, and New England Bach festivals. Mr. Merfeld has performed concertos with many orchestras including the national orchestras of Costa Rica and Bolivia, the Dartmouth Symphony Orchestra, and the Brandeis University Orchestra.

Mr. Merfeld has recorded on the Sine Qua Non and Centaur labels, has appeared on National Public Television, and has been a frequent performer on WGBH-Boston and WXQR-New York radio stations. He is currently on the piano and chamber music faculty of Boston University and Boston University's Tanglewood Institute.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, February 28
8 p.m.

Boston University Symphony Orchestra
David Hoose, *conductor*
Yuri and Dana Mazurkevich, *violin*
Tsai Performance Center

Wednesday, March 13
8 p.m.

Faculty-Guest Artists Concert
Concordia String Trio
Tsai Performance Center

Thursday, March 14
8 p.m.

Faculty Concert
Maria Clodes-Jaguaribe, *piano*
Tsai Performance Center

Monday, March 18
8 p.m.

Faculty Concert
Jules Eskin, *cello*
Ethan Sloane, *clarinet*
Virginia Eskin, *guest artist, piano*
Tsai Performance Center

Wednesday, March 20
8 p.m.

ALEA III
Theodore Antoniou, *director*
Tsai Performance Center

Tuesday, March 26
8 p.m.

Boston University Chamber Orchestra
David Hoose, *Orchestral Director*
Tsai Performance Center

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