

SUMMER FESTIVAL

WEDNESDAY, JULY 3, 2013

8:00 PM

SEATTLE
CHAMBER
MUSIC
SOCIETY

PROGRAM

ANDRÉ JOLIVET

Heptade

Allegro

Vivo

Cantante

Veemente

Maestoso

Sempre stringendo

Vivo e ritmico

Jens Lindemann trumpet / **Michael Werner** percussion

ALEXANDER BORODIN

Quintet for Piano and Strings in C minor

Andante

Scherzo: Allegro non troppo

Finale: Allegro moderato

James Ehnes violin / **Jesse Mills** violin / **Cynthia Phelps** viola / **Julie Albers** cello /

Andrew Armstrong piano

INTERMISSION

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

Quintet for Piano and Strings in A Major, Op. 81

Allegro ma non tanto

Dumka: Andante con moto—Vivace—Andante con moto

Scherzo (Furiant): Molto vivace

Finale: Allegro

Augustin Hadelich violin / **Ida Levin** violin / **Rebecca Albers** viola / **Ronald Thomas** cello /

Inon Barnatan piano

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ANDRÉ JOLIVET

(1905-1974)

Heptade (1970)

Parisian-born André Jolivet enjoyed—or overcame—the gift of being born to parents that one might assume would support his musical aspirations; one was a painter, the other a pianist. Yet they urged him to become a teacher rather than to pursue the uncertainties of life as a professional musician. Jolivet did teach for a while but yielded to the seductive allure of the Euterpe—muse of music—and began studying cello before eventually switching to composition. Well-versed in classical harmony and counterpoint he was smitten by the music of Arnold Schoenberg, inspiring him to study with Edgard Varèse, who nurtured in his student a passion for musical acoustics and atonal music. Jolivet was proud of his French artistic heritage, and in an article in 1945 he wrote more polemically than accurately that “true French music owes nothing to Stravinsky.” (The opening of the Russian master’s opera *Le Rossignol* is obviously beholden to Debussy’ earlier *Nuages* from *Nocturnes*.)

After writing a number of concertos during the 1960s, Jolivet wrote *Heptade* for trumpet soloist Maurice André. The seven-movement work demands the kind of virtuosity that can intimidate a lesser player yet inspire a musician who is up to the daunting task. No less daunting is the vast array of percussion instruments to be handled by one very busy musician, including cow bells, Chinese blocks, Woodblocks, Hi Hat, tambourine, whistle, bass drum, tam tam and snare drum.

The opening *Allegro* sets out with a rising flourish on the trumpet accompanied by a thump from the bass drum before the percussion battery enters, surrounding the trumpet with kaleidoscopic sonorities from cowbells, Chinese blocks, woodblocks, Hi Hat and tambourine. At times the trumpet goes silent, giving the percussionist a chance to shine in the manner of a jazz combo’s solo except, of course that this music is written out, not improvised.

Marked *Vivo* the second movement begins with a riff on snare drum before the trumpet enters. After another short, quieter drum solo the trumpet continues with a melodic fragment energized by upward leaps before

briefly employing a mute to create a contrasting sonority. With high wailing from the trumpet the *Vivo* ends with an emphatic closing thwack from snare drum.

The following *Cantante* opens with a quiet percussion introduction to the trumpet’s equally quiet entrance of a subdued chromatic yet lyrically flowing melody. The trumpet line flows over a spare snare-drum background graced with occasional comments from the cymbals underlined by low drum beats from the bass drum. A slightly “bluesy” sound characterizes the movement.

Movement No. 4, *Veemente* begins with an introductory statement on bongos and conga that engages in dialogue with the muted trumpet. Raucous interjections from the whistle intrude gleefully. Throughout the movement the trumpet posits an angular melody over the adlib-like drum. After a moment of trumpet wailing, the movement ends on an unaccompanied rising trumpet figure.

The trumpet opens the *Maestoso* on a crescendo before the entry of drums and cymbal. Occasional sounds from wood chimes enhance the tonal palette. The trumpet continues less floridly, enhancing its spare line with another swell. Sudden bursts from percussion emerge. As elsewhere in the overall piece the trumpet line is replete with large intervallic leaps. A series of flutter-tongued figures on the trumpet are punctuated by cymbals and drums before ending with a final trumpet crescendo over the drums.

The sixth movement, *Sempre stringendo* opens with a snare drum and cymbal riff. The trumpet enters with an emphatically stated line incorporating a combination of rising and falling figures backed by assertive percussion. As elsewhere the trumpet line is colored by an occasional wail. An emphatic percussion thwack joins the trumpet in closing the movement.

The finale, *Vivo e ritmico* begins with the snare drum soon joined by cowbells, tambourine, Woodblocks with other percussion joining before the briefly muted trumpet enters before removing the mute. The entire movement is buoyantly energetic and captivates the listener through its suggestive Latin jazz personality. A rising trumpet slide ends on an emphatic final note seconded by a final blast from the percussion.

ALEXANDER BORODIN

(1833–1887)

Quintet for Piano and Strings in C minor (1862)

When we think of Borodin as a composer it is most likely as the creator of Prince Igor, the atmospheric *On the Steppes of Central Asia*, and—with specific regard to chamber music—his two late string quartets, dating respectively from 1879 and 1881. These irresistibly lyrical pieces were not born in a vacuum; indeed, they had many antecedents among a slew of early chamber works by Borodin. As early as the 1840s and 1850s, the young composer had already composed (either partially, completely or lost) string trios, a quartet for flute, oboe, viola and cello, as well as a Quintet for Strings in F minor dating from 1853–54. By the 1860s he had clearly passed from journeyman to a fully accomplished composer of chamber music as evidenced by his Quintet for Piano and Strings in C minor. He composed the three-movement work while vacationing in Italy.

Borodin opens the Quintet with an *Andante* in rondo form (a repeated or slightly altered “A” section with contrasting episodes sandwiched between them). One cannot help but notice the distinctly Russian character of the primary melodic material, no surprise given Borodin’s involvement in the artistic Nationalist movement traceable to Mikhail Glinka’s pioneering efforts to replace the Westernized style of 18th- and early 19th-century practice in the motherland. The piano posits the first theme but soon tosses it to the strings to begin a dialogue between the keyboard and the string ensemble. A lyrical counter-theme, again delivered by the piano, finds rich expansion when joined by the strings. After negotiating through a basic A–B–A–B–A sequence Borodin brings the movement to a close with a coda based on the lyrical second theme.

Another Russian-sounding and animated tune launches the *Scherzo*. The theme’s shape leads the listener to expect a fugal treatment but Borodin quickly brings a halt to the initial polyphony and bestows a gift in the shape of a buoyant tune on the violin with a backdrop of pizzicatos in the remaining strings. During the mid-movement Trio, the piano takes the lead in this laid-back and lyrical section, and the strings add a sense

of sundrenched warmth. The return of the “A” section brings back the contrapuntal theme, which is treated to more “unsuccessful” efforts to actually bring a fugal episode to fruition. In a Haydn-esque bit of humor Borodin ends the movement with a brief string pizzicato capped by a simple two-note dominant to tonic closing ploy from the piano.

The *Allegro moderato* finale exceeds the length of the first two movements combined. The high strings combine in a sweet and sad theme soon shared by the piano. An emphatic secondary motive adds energy and drama to the proceedings. Though last movements are often in rondo form Borodin casts this finale in sonata-allegro fashion—typically used in opening movements—perhaps because he had already cast the *Andante* as a rondo. One notes the skillful writing for the piano and the strings, a finely balanced affirmation of both individuality and conversational interplay. As the movement approaches completion the music swells to a peak of noble fervor before ending in sweet quietude.

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

(1841–1904)

Quintet for Piano and Strings in A Major, *Op. 81* (1887)

In his well-filled canon of chamber music Antonín Dvořák balanced two major influences on his style: his absorption of musical construction from his lifelong advocate and friend, Johannes Brahms, and his ever-vital Bohemian birthright. Even when strongly Brahmsian, Dvořák infuses the textures with melodic snippets and chord progressions unequivocally Czech, and in the midst of his most unbuttoned Czech rusticity, a rigorous formal schema evokes the mental processes of Brahms.

His fine Op. 81 Piano Quintet, a thoroughbred in Romantic era chamber music, dates from 1887 when Dvořák was living on his brother-in-law’s estate at Vysoká, a country village not far from Prague. Written quickly by a composer at the height of his creative powers, the Quintet is charged by sudden mood shifts that parallel his basic personality. Episodes of melancholy yield to buoyant optimism, anxiety to serenity.

Such noticeable shifts are readily apparent in the initial part of the opening *Allegro ma non tanto*. A sweetly beguiling tune for cello supported by rippling piano figurations soon morphs into a vehement alternative version, forcefully articulated by the two violins. Drama-enhancing detours into the minor mode underscore emotional volatility. A brilliant development section demonstrates mastery of classic sonata form and variation, no doubt achieved through his intimate knowledge of Brahms' scores. The movement closes dramatically as the opening theme is further animated by assertive octaves in the piano part.

The following *Rondo* is based on a *Dumka*, a Ukrainian song of lament much used by Dvořák; the sad *Dumka* tune serves as a connective link between contrasting episodes. Here, too, the music explores a wealth of moods often achieved by disguising the recurring theme through changes in overall shape, tempo and texture. A brief, very fast central section provides a clever permutation of the doleful main theme.

Another country-based dance, the traditional Czech *Furiant*, animates the ensuing *Scherzo*, investing the movement with great ardor. By contrast, the rustic Trio is the epitome of unselfconscious charm.

The *Finale* leaps forward with unstoppable fervor, drawing energy from its dotted main theme; a bit of folk-fiddling adds a dash of local color even as the composer transforms this rustic gesture into a learned but vital *Fugato*, another reflection of his Brahmsian inclination. As the movement draws near its close it seems as if Dvořák will go quietly in a dreamlike manner, but an irrepressible burst of enthusiastic energy does exactly the opposite in the closing half-minute or so.

Program Notes by Steven Lowe
