

SONOSYNTHESIS:

poetry & prose

twentieth century works for flute and piano

Cari Shipp, flute

Jeremy Thompson, piano

program

Duo for Flute and Piano

Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

Flowing

Poetic, somewhat mournful

Lively, with bounce

Poem

Charles T. Griffes (1884 - 1920)

Sonata for Flute and Piano

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Moderato

Presto

Andante

Allegro con brio

Cari Shipp, who grew up in the mountains of the Southwest, knew she would be a flutist after her first year of study. A trip to the rustic woods of northern Michigan in her eleventh summer sealed her fate in this matter. She would spend three summers in those woods at Interlochen Arts Camp and then graduate from the Interlochen Arts Academy before pursuing two degrees in flute performance; her bachelors of music from the University of North Texas, and her masters of music from The Peabody Conservatory.

Cari moved to Virginia in 2010 and began playing with groups such as the Opera on the James Orchestra, the Virginia Consort, and the Shenandoah Valley Bach Festival Orchestra as well as three years serving as principal flutist with the Hunt Valley Symphony Orchestra in Maryland. She has also been the featured soloist at venues throughout Maryland, Washington DC, and Central Virginia.

In 2016 she founded a benefit concert series which she named SONOSYNTHESIS meaning ‘the fusion of sound’. In this series she combines her urgent desire to join alongside those working to better the community with her passion for performing classical music. She has since given six benefit concerts for a variety of local organizations joined by pianists Jeremy Thompson and Julie Bernstein as well as vocalists, guitarists, and other musicians. SONOSYNTHESIS concerts are marked by the combination of classical performance with creative touches to connect with audience members well versed in classical music as well as those new to the repertoire.

When she isn’t teaching private lessons or preparing for an upcoming performance she can be found hiking along the Blue Ridge, reading in a cozy nook, or traveling with her husband and their dog (their cat prefers to stay at home). Learn more at www.carishipp.com.

Jeremy Thompson was born in Dipper Harbour, a small fishing village in New Brunswick, Canada. He furthered his studies at McGill University in Montreal, studying piano with Marina Mdivani who was herself a student of Emil Gilels.

He began his organ studies while he was in Montreal, among the many incredible instruments of that city. He was fortunate to have the opportunity to continue his studies with Dr. John Grew. In 2005, he earned a Doctorate of Music in piano performance from McGill, where he held two of Canada’s most prestigious doctoral fellowships.

He has appeared frequently with orchestras including the Saint Petersburg State Academic Orchestra, the Saratov Philharmonic Orchestra, the Georgian National Orchestra, the Charlottesville Symphony, the North Carolina Symphony and the McGill Symphony Orchestra. He has performed extensively throughout North America in both solo and chamber music settings, and has also completed three tours to the former Soviet Union.

Thompson enjoys performing music from all eras, yet specializes in highly virtuosic repertoire. He has focused recently on several recording projects, including a 2 CD set of the organ music of Karl Höller on the Raven CD label. He recently released a recording of the piano music of Vasily Kalafati on the Toccata Classics label. Previous recordings include an album of the piano music of Scriabin on the MSRCD label, and a recording of contemporary piano music from Quebec on the McGill label. Learn more at www.jeremythompsonmusic.com.

Listening Notes

Duo for Flute and Piano, 1971 | Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

I. Flowing

The opening movement starts with flute alone. It's as if Copland knew that to write a true duo, not simply solo instrument with accompaniment, would require some solo moments for the flute. In true Copland fashion, however, the opening solo immediately evokes images of rolling hills, foggy rivers and verdant pastures. The open intervals give way to an open landscape, the Americana sound the composer became so known for.

The sparse opening leads to a sparkling piano entrance joining the flute in a brighter moment before returning to the opening style in the form of a recitative (where the music is communicated in shorter, somewhat detached phrases). Afterwards, the piano has its turn, introducing a new melody the composer marks as 'much faster (always flowing) with delicacy.' Finally, the true duet begins. The two instruments exchange the flowing melody and then move into a fast dance, like droplets of water skipping over stones.

Eventually the dance delicately dissipates, bringing back the calm of the opening and ultimately a more bravado flute solo ending in a harmonic, which is when one uses the fingering of a lower note and over-blows to cause a higher note to come out, but this brings out hints of other notes in the harmonic series. (It makes an interesting sound, quite different from if the same note were played normally).

II. Poetic, somewhat mournful

The movement's indication above sums up the mood quite well. Sometimes the tone between the flute and piano is hollow, cool, distant. Other times it is heavy and off-set, full of conflict. Again in this movement Copland calls for the flute to play in harmonics, this time when the piano has the melody, therefore flute serving as the background - almost with nostalgia. The mourning is not without beauty, however, as the instruments come together after their rhythmic and tonal distance, arriving at a long expected resolution to the tension. The movement ends as it begins and immediately continues into the third movement (we call this 'attacca').

III. Lively, with bounce

If the first movement is pastoral in nature and the second, poetic, then the third is a lively chat between old friends who comfortably switch between laughter and bickering. Copland continues to play with style with intense and deliberate patterns of accents and tenutos (giving weight and length to a note without accent) exchanged between the two instruments. The harsh alternating lines between flute and piano resolve into a recap, more celebratory than before. Finally the movement concludes in a free and raucous dance, exclaiming with intensity and ending, if not on the same note, in a comfortable harmony.

Poem, 1918 | Charles T. Griffes (1884-1920)

[Enjoy the dancing melodies which might make you think of Indigenous cultures but actually has no connection whatsoever.] Holding all the tension and unanswered questions of its literary counterpart, Poem is six pages of angsty flute playing. While there are fast moments, the piece on the whole is lyrical, and relentlessly so. The melodies are dark and twisting, mystical and evocative. Unlike the Copland or the Prokofiev, the piano is not a duet partner but a thundering, rumbling undercurrent carrying the angst in a persistent and driving flow. Not without a climax, however, things do speed up before coming to the same conclusion with which they started, and ending terribly unresolved and quiet, as angst so often does.

Sonata for Flute and Piano, 1943 | Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

I. Moderato

This quintessentially Russian work opens with a scene perfectly suited to the daily life of a countryside Soviet. The flute melody is like a field of sunflowers with Babushkas in colorful aprons and scarves, but the dark piano washes the scene in sepia. Certainly not allowed to stay serene (if grim) for long, the fury of notes begins early, spanning multiple octaves repeatedly over just a few measures. But once again, an idiomatic Eastern European melody settles in to continue business as usual. The whole thing is repeated before the flute takes over in a low, sharp march, calling the piano to join before returning to the opening melody. Once out of the recollection, the driving articulations join with dark intervals leading to an absolute climax of five of the highest note the flute can play in quick succession (after a killer run leading up to each of them, just for kicks). Giving the flute a moment to recover the piano takes over and brings it back to, yet again, the opening scene, covering once again the daily life and troubles of the comrades in cloudy hues. Before ending with a calm twilight is a flurry of fiery sunset and explosions of stars.

II. Scherzo Presto

Forward, forward, ever forward, high and low and in between, the scherzo moves us onward. Eighth note after eighth note (though so fast who would know they were but eighth notes?) the instruments press onward until finally the nervous energy pours out in rapid runs shared between the two players. This gives way to, finally, some new rhythms which once again alert us to the innate Russian-ness of this piece. Prokofiev plays between the bar lines (literally) using emphasis to break up the monotony of the repeated rhythm. Though soon enough we are back to the opening melody, if we can call it that, there is finally relief in a flowing and graceful melody. For a moment, that is, before the flow becomes shooting stars erupting in the once serene sky. Thunder joins the shooting stars before returning to the opening and taking the same wild ride once more, finally ending with a scatter.

III. Andante

Let the magic wash over you. The hollowness, the haunting of the melody. Is it shared between the instruments, or do they create one melody together? The large intervals cross effortlessly, spanning lifetimes without notice, but never escaping the density of the melodic line.

And then, the slow movement somehow stays slow though so moving through note after note, and yet without feeling hurried, but drawing, calling us to sink in and be overwhelmed by the aurora, the endless depths and shimmering lights. Again unclear if the two instruments are working perfectly together or creating a single line of music, the rapid yet flowing notes build and undulate together before finally giving way to the mysterious opening, the hollow haunting. Impossibly, the eternal journey closes with something that might be called peace.

IV. Allegro con brio

If the first movement is a country scene perhaps featuring grandmothers and soldiers sauntering along in their daily country lives, the fourth movement is the big city, cobbled streets and fiery, candy-colored steeples reaching to the sky. Once again the darkness is undeniable, and yet, below the surface. Not all is unwell, yet pleasantries and sweet nothings have no place in this world. Power and victory drive this scene forward. Though (as you may have noticed either by listening or by reading) Prokofiev was often a fan of recalling earlier material, this moment is a rondo meaning that we return over and over to the opening melody with little vignettes sprinkled between. At times the glorious, heavy piano melody is celebrated by the sparkling, soaring flute line. Beauty does not go unexplored, coming forth in sweeping lines amid the marches and barked orders. Perhaps life in the countryside persists as it always have, not quite able to shine as bright as it might. Perhaps the driving motion won't end in anything but a clatter. Perhaps the sparkling magic exists only in the dreams of those who slumber in Mother Russia, but whatever the mission of these we see in the conclusion, they have undoubtedly succeeded and are celebrating, toasting loudly “ваше здоровье” (vashe zdorov'ye - ‘to your health!’).