

SONOSYNTHESIS:

SONG & DANCE

Cari Shipp, flute
Colin Davin, guitar

PROGRAM

Histoire du Tango

Bordel 1900

Café 1930

Nightclub 1960

Concert D'aujourd'hui

Astor Piazzolla

(1921–1992)

Snow Dreams

Joan Tower

(b. 1938)

Rumänische Volkstänze (Romanian Folk Dances)

Béla Bartók

(1881–1945)

1. Joc cu bătă
2. Brâul
3. Pe loc
4. Buciumeana
5. Poarga Românească
6. Mărunțel

Sonata in E Major, BWV 1035

Johann Sebastian Bach

I. Adagio ma non tanto

(1685–1750)

II. Allegro

III. Siciliano

IV. Allegro assai

Fantaisie brillante sur Carmen

François Borne

(1840–1920)

MUSICAN BIOS

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 with Dr. Mary Karen Clardy and her Master of Music from The Peabody Conservatory with Laurie Sokoloff.

Cari moved to Virginia in 2010 and grew her teaching studio in addition to performing in solo, chamber, and orchestral settings. She has been the featured soloist in concert series throughout Baltimore, DC, and Virginia such as Music on Park Street, the Charlottesville Salon Series, The Westchester Club Library Series, and has performed with the Opera on the James, The Virginia Consort, the Shenandoah Valley Bach Festival, the Charlottesville Symphony Orchestra, and Lynchburg Symphony. She also served as principal flutist with the Hunt Valley Symphony Orchestra for three years.

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 cats prefer to stay at home).

Cari plays a handmade 14k Powell flute and handmade kingwood Powell piccolo.

Guitarist Colin Davin has emerged as one of today's most dynamic artists. Performance highlights include concertos with the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, New Mexico Philharmonic, and Richmond Symphony; and duo collaborations with guitarist Sharon Isbin, harpist Emily Levin, soprano Estelí Gomez, violinist Tessa Lark, and cellist Edward Arron.

Colin appeared as a featured musical guest on the Late Show with David Letterman alongside the late Jessye Norman. He has performed at venues around the world, including Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, the Alhambra Palace, the Paris Conservatoire, the Fridge Fringe in Dubai, and Afghanistan National Institute of Music.

Colin Davin is the Director of Guitar Studies and Associate Professor of Guitar at Shenandoah Conservatory. He previously served as Co-Head of the guitar department at the Cleveland Institute of Music, and on the faculty of the Baldwin Wallace Conservatory. He has presented masterclasses at The Juilliard School, Aspen Music Festival, Oberlin Conservatory, and more.

He holds a Master of Music from The Juilliard School, with Sharon Isbin; a Bachelor of Music from the University of Southern California, with William Kanengiser; and underwent preparatory studies at the Cleveland Institute of Music, with Jason Vieaux.

Colin Davin plays a guitar by Joshia de Jonge with Augustine Strings.

LISTENING NOTES

Histoire du tango (1985) - Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992)

Original instrumentation: This is the original form, but it has been transcribed for a number of other instrumentations including the bandoneon (also called a concertina but effectively an accordion) which Piazzolla himself played from an early age.

Why flute and guitar?

The tango was originally played on these very instruments! How delightful.

Why program this piece?

Like cooking on the grill every Fourth of July, it can't be overdone if it's a hit every time. The tango is a passion-filled encapsulation of the human experience: tension and resolution while finding connection. What's not to love?

About the piece:

The tango originated in the streets and brothels of Buenos Aires. The powerful, seductive partner dance rose to ballroom status and spread to Paris and throughout Europe in the early twentieth century. Piazzolla was not only influenced by the tango in his native Argentina but was instrumental in the evolution of it both for the ballroom and the concert hall, largely thanks to the influence of French composer Nadia Boulanger. Learning a lesson many classical musicians face, Piazzolla learned that his efforts to be more mainstream in the classical world required him to sacrifice that which made him singular. Boulanger pointed out that his symphonies and sonatas sounded like mere impressions of his contemporaries, but his tangos sounded distinctly of Piazzolla. His artfully constructed pieces based on this honest, human dance reflect and require great skill and resound with the true melancholy of the humanity. Now, 'Piazzolla' and 'tango' are nearly synonymous.

Movement summary:

Bordel, 1900: Picture it, Buenos Aires, 1882. A gentleman caller notices a lively time happening at a brothel and knocks on the door. The seductive, intricate, flirtatious

dance begins. The give and take, the grace, the liveliness. The tango is associated with a red dress for a reason! Enjoy the party.

Cafe, 1930: It is thirty years later and people are listening to the tango more than they are dancing to it. Lean back in your chair, pretend the smoky haze isn't bad for your health, and feel the weight of summer heat as you take in these sultry melodies. There's a little less flirtation but a little more romance, a little more melancholy.

Night Club, 1960: The world is more accessible and cultures are combining. The bossa nova craze can be heard and felt. The nightclub scene is popular all over the world - do you catch the Glen Miller reference? I've found no evidence that Piazzolla did this intentionally but I certainly can't un-hear it and it fits the vibe and the time period.

Concert D'aujourd'hui (modern day concert): We've made it to modern day and the tango is still with us. We can hear its influence in Bartók, Stravinsky, etc, and in this movement we hear their influence in return. Piazzolla called it "today's tango, and the tango of the future as well." And here we are almost (but definitely not quite!) 40 years after the piece's composition and embracing Piazzolla's tangos.

Snow Dreams (1983) - Joan Tower (b. 1938)

Original instrumentation: flute and guitar. Fun fact, Colin has worked with both the guitarist and flutist to whom the piece was dedicated.

Why flute and guitar?

Sharon Isbin (guitarist) and Carol Wincenc (flutist) commissioned it through a grant from the Schubert Club.

Why program this piece?

Colin is a champion of contemporary music, and even when it is not my preference, I believe it deserves to be heard and played. If given the chance to program music by a living woman composer, one does not turn it down.

About the piece:

Quoting the composer herself: "There are many different images of snow, its forms and its movements: light snow flakes pockets of swirls of snow, rounded drifts, long white plains of blankets of snow, light and heavy snowfalls, etc. Many of these images can be found in the piece, if in fact, they need to be found at all. The listener will determine that choice."

I love visiting art museums, but modern art is my favorite. When taking in visual art I have no problem with the abstract, the lack of explanation, the acceptance of focusing on how the art makes me feel rather than what it means. But for music, I am drawn to storylines and poetry turned into pitch. If you are like me, then this piece might not make sense to you upon first (or thirtieth) listen, let alone finding it enjoyable. That's okay. Know that you have heard a piece written by a prolific composer likely during your lifetime and just shy of my own.

In this piece, there are solo moments for each instrument, and otherwise the two are functioning as equal partners, no hint of primary and accompaniment parts which is befitting the two titans to whom the piece is dedicated. Tower uses the full range of textures and timbres available to both instruments to depict the varying densities and forms of snow, or whatever image (if any) suits you.

Romanian Folk Dances (1915) - Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

Original instrumentation: solo piano, but this piece is also frequently played by full orchestra which Bartók orchestrated himself. This transcription was done by American contemporary composer Arthur Levering.

Why flute and guitar?

When visiting Romania, Bartók was inspired by the local instruments, among which were guitar and peasant flute. Though the composer himself did not write a transcription for this ensemble, it is idiomatic of his inspiration.

Why program this piece?

It was love at first listen, but aside from that, the representation of authentic folk songs deserves its place in a program featuring guitar. Often, Bartók fills a much needed twentieth century-sized hole on a program, but in this case you might notice that most of the program is from this era (though hardly sounds monotonous).

About the piece:

Bartók wrote this piece for piano after a hiatus from composing. He had traveled to the Transylvanian region multiple times in the five years preceding and recording or transcribed much of the folk music he heard. In turning these indigenous melodies into art song, Bartók preserved the melodic structure but infused it with his singular harmonic flair.

Movement summary:

The first dance is taken from Romani violinists and is called "Stick Dance." In your mind's eye do you see them dancing with sticks? Like sticks? Brandishing their bows as sticks? Up to you, but it makes for a gripping entrance into this colorful world.

The second dance is the provocative “Sash Dance,” teasingly alternating between “come hither” and “get thee away.”

This is followed by the dance simply called “In One Spot” which is played on piccolo like in the full orchestra version. This dance is dark and sinister despite the high pitch of the piccolo, mesmerizing in its intricacy.

The fourth dance is from the Buscum region and is alone in its slow tempo and 3/4 meter.

Following are the combined final two dances, both of which are fast (“Romanian Polka” followed by the ever subtle “Fast Dance”) which bring a rousing finish to these Slavic songs.

Sonata in E Major (1741) - Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Original instrumentation: flute, harpsichord, and continuo but most often performed with flute and piano.

Why flute and guitar?

The resonant plucked strings bring out the delicacy of the accompaniment and allow the flute to join as a duet with ease. In this arrangement the guitar is compensating for both the full keyboard part as well as the continuo usually played by a cello.

Why program this piece?

The seven sonatas composed for flute by Bach are a badge of honor in our large repertoire. They are often asked for in auditions and competitions, but I find them best enjoyed when played simply for the sake of it. Proving that it’s never too late to do something new and interesting with Bach, Marina Piccinini recorded all of the sonatas with a guitar duo rather than a keyboard instrument, and ever since hearing that ensemble I’ve longed for the opportunity to perform them with guitar.

Bach’s music set the so-called rules by breaking all of them, and his complicated rhythms can be appreciated even if never fully understood. Think of listening to Bach as looking up at a huge, ornate oil painting with lots of scenes. Cupids, but also centaurs. People holding court but also someone holding a baby under a tree and another one crying over a book in the corner. The colors are vivid and varied and yet dated, but there’s much to see (or in this case, hear). Absorb and enjoy the amount of detail, even if it’s not to your taste.

About the piece itself:

Of the seven total sonatas we would list today as written by J.S. Bach, only four of them are considered “authentic,” or traceable to a score autographed in Johann Sebastian’s own hand. Much is speculated about the remaining three, mostly that they were penned by one of his children and attributed to their father in effort to sell more copies. But this one we know to

be the genuine work of J.S. Bach. This piece survived because it was found in the collection of Frederick the Great, the king of Prussia, a well-known flutist who worked with not only J.S. Bach but also his most prodigious heir, Carl Philipp Emmanuel Bach.

Movement summary:

This sonata, like most, has four movements. Unlike most, it opens with a slow movement and in this case a shorter one than usual. The first movement is a delicate but melismatic song on peaceful, serene themes but not without occasional pangs of grief. The second movement is the first of the two dances that sound freer than the usual dances performed in the wealthy courts. It has a firm rhythmic emphasis like the dancer's stomps leaving wisps of dust in their wake. The third movement, Siciliano, is a mournful lament with more tension than resolution. The final movement exchanges the stomping for delicate, intricate footwork.

Fantaisie brillante sur Carmen (1880) - François Borne (1840-1920)

Original instrumentation: flute and piano

Why flute and guitar?

While I'd gladly (and have) performed this with piano, it is - dare I say - a little bit cheesy. I think the piano shines more when not attempting the role of an entire orchestra as the opera would normally have so joining with piano for the *Fantaisie* feels a bit contrived. But with the guitar the character and atmosphere of the streets and mountains of Spain (a note on this later) are colorful and vivid.

Why program this piece?

Don't you feel you deserve these enchanting, catchy, utter bops (this means that the tunes are appealing and make you want to dance) after all this other stuff? Same. This piece provides the expected firework ending to a concert and is loads of fun. Why NOT program it? (There are actually several reasons which are covered below.)

About the piece:

François Borne's largest legacy is this very work. Little is known about him, but what we do know is fitting. He was French (like Bizet, the composer of *Carmen*), playing principal flute with an opera company in Bordeaux and teaching and composing at the conservatory in Toulouse. He worked with Theobald Böhm on the Böhm flute (the key mechanisms and system still used today) which is unsurprising given the type of technique used in his *Fantaisie*.

Carmen is, like so many works, titled for the woman lead but centered around the man, Don José. Those who haven't seen the opera know of her seductive habanera and the cheerful, raucous drinking song celebrating the life of a bullfighter (or a man who is chasing a

challenging woman...sorry was that supposed to be a subtle reference?) But few recall the slogging, heart wrenching aria when Carmen learns she is fated to die. Don José kills her because if he can't have her, no one can! And then he has the audacity to be...sad that she's dead. Some recent productions have made an effort to alter the ending in recognition of the celebration and almost justification of women dying violently at the hands of men they know. The rampant misogyny in opera (the women nearly always die, and tend to be either mentally or physically ill) is pervasive and not at all hidden. I think this piece is better for eschewing the issue of Carmen's dark destiny by not including the melody foreshadowing her demise.

That being said, while the piece is set in Spain and includes melodies that most people would assume are Spanish folk songs (the only one which may have actually been an authentic and therefore stolen Spanish folk song is the Habanera), the piece was composed by a French Romantic who, like his contemporaries, were obsessed with the "perceived exoticism" of their neighbor to the south.

In short, the character Carmen is a Spanish femme fatale Romani stereotype seen (and murdered) thoroughly through the male gaze. But despite that, women (particularly of note is flamenco dancer and actual Seville native María Pagés) are finding the truth underneath the male gaze even in characters like Carmen: women acknowledging their own sexuality, and trying to live fully and freely within rather than in spite of their marginalized communities of origin.

Bonus Fun Fact: On Tonality

In a grad school seminar about the music of Schubert (my favorite class ever), we had a discussion about whether they keys ('home' or 'centered' notes) the pieces are originally written in are relevant. We know that sometimes composers picked keys not because of their playability (or in spite of it) but because some keys are assigned meaning. But sometimes pieces get transposed for any numbers of reasons, like maybe a soprano wishes to sing a piece originally written for tenor. Most people in the audience (me included) wouldn't just know by hearing what key a piece is in, so why not just play it in whatever key is comfortable? Firstly, there's some modicum of respect for the composer by honoring what they wrote when possible. Secondly, it's time consuming to transpose things. But I think in the big ethereal world of music it does matter what key was chosen, just like I appreciate when the font choice is explained in the back of a novel.

This concert is unintentionally almost entirely centered on the note E. The Bach sonata is in E Major. *Snow Dreams* has more E's than any other note (and it's not lacking in notes). Carmen could be retitled "101 ways to play chords based on E." An obvious reason is because E Major/minor chords pair well with the guitar's open strings (never mind it's rather a nuisance for flute, but we can hardly complain when we only have to play one note at a time).

Let's consult a dead white man for insight! Sounds great, no one ever tries that. Austrian pianist, composer, and educator Ernst Pauer created a list of pieces that fit certain characteristics he attributed to each key. Pauer calls E major "...the brightest and most powerful key, expresses joy, magnificence, splendor, and the highest brilliancy." After tonight's performance, do you agree?

A NOTE OF THANKS:

As much as musicians love practicing in an empty room with empty cups of coffee strewn about, nothing beats sharing our passion with others. Your presence means the world to us. Thank you so much.

Thank you to Park Street Christian Church for hosting, Bailey Printing for printing the posters, and Blue Ridge Event Production for the lights which my husband Brian Meffle set up. And special thank you to Addison Gardner for acting as Box Office!

CONCERT NOTIFICATIONS:

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