

Chamber Music at Noon

Tuesday, May 8, 2007

Beckman Institute Courtyard - California Institute of Technology

Pastorale from Flute Sonata in A Major

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

Song and Dance

J. Richard Heuckeroth Van Hessen

Airs Populaires Grecs

Pavel Klupil

Allegretto

Moderato

Allegro

Lauren Savage ('08, Geology) recorder

Pablo Abad-Manterola (graduate student, Mechanical Engineering) guitar

Phantasy Quintet

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

Prelude. Lento ma non troppo

Scherzo. Prestissimo

Alla Sarabanda. Lento

Burlesca. Allegro moderato

Isaac Chao ('10, Mathematics and Computer Science) violin

Julian Panetta ('10, Computer Science) violin

Elah Bozorg-Grayeli ('08, Mechanical Engineering) viola

Sarah Li ('10, Mechanical Engineering) viola

Joe Antognini ('10, Astrophysics) cello

Concerto in G Major for 4 Violins

Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767)

Largo

Allegro

Adagio

Vivace

Josh Zahl ('08, Mathematics) violin

Diana Dou ('10, Biology) violin

Sonia Tikoo ('08, Geology) violin

Jesse Arnold ('08, Astrophysics) violin

Donald E. Hudson Visiting Artist Sharon Harman coached the Telemann quartet. Delores Bing coached the other ensembles.

**This concert is sponsored by Student Affairs, the Friends of Caltech Instrumental Music
and the Donald E. Hudson Chamber Music Fund.**

***Please fill out a mailing list form and leave it in the box on the lunch table
if you would like to be notified about future noon concerts.***

COMING EVENTS

Bandorama

Friday, May 11 and Saturday, May 12 – 8:00pm, Ramo Auditorium
Featuring the Caltech Jazz Bands & the Caltech-Occidental Concert Band
World Premiere of “Star Life” – music by Les Deutsch with Spitzer Telescope images and
narration by John and Patti Brugman

Caltech Chamber Music

Sunday, May 13 – 3:30 pm, Dabney Lounge
Beethoven Piano Trio, piano duets, Walker Reel

Chamber Music at Noon

Friday, May 18 - Dabney Lounge
FREE LUNCH for 100 people
Quartet by Telemann, Pachelbel’s Kanon and Gigue with the original instrumentation, and a
Doppler trio for flutes and piano

The Caltech Glee Clubs present “A Night at the Opera”

May 18, 8:00 pm, Dabney Lounge and May 19, 8:00 pm, Ramo Auditorium
These back to back concerts will feature opera choruses, including "Brindisi" from *La Traviata*
and "Va, Pensiero" from *Nabucco*, works from *The Magic Flute*, *Fledermaus*, and *Tannheuser*,
among others. Students will perform solo arias, as will guest artist mezzo-soprano Olga Perez.

Caltech Chamber Music

Sunday, May 20 – 3:30 pm, Dabney Lounge
Beethoven String Quartet Op. 130, music for two pianos

These notes are written by student performers in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Mu25, History of Chamber Music, offered by The Division of Humanities and Social Sciences

The Phantasy Quintet

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

Composed: 1912

Length: c. 16 minutes

Orchestration: 2 violins, 2 violas, and cello

Ralph (pronounced "Rafe") Vaughan Williams was born in 1872 in Down Ampney, Gloucestershire. Although born into an upper middle-class family, he worked hard for everything he wanted. As a student, he studied both the piano, "which I never could play, and the violin, which was my musical salvation." After attending the Charterhouse School, he enrolled at the Royal College of Music, where he studied history and music. In 1904, he discovered English folk songs, which had been losing popularity due to the increase in musical literacy and printed music. Fascinated with these beautiful themes, Vaughan Williams traveled around England and transcribed many of these pieces, which he would later integrate into his compositions.

At age 40, Vaughan Williams enlisted in the army to fight in WWI. Although by this time he was an accomplished composer and a well-known professor of music, he nonetheless turned down the officer and teaching positions in the army and became an artilleryman and medical orderly. While in the trenches, he would organize chorales and performances in order to preserve the morale of his fellow soldiers. Once he returned from the war, his style of composing became more mature and mystical. He died in 1958, the day before he was to record his ninth symphony.

Vaughan Williams' integration of the English folk song into his music would be the factor that would set him apart from many English composers. Although some of his pieces contain familiar melodies, such as his "Fantasia on Greensleeves" (1924-1928), many contain songs that had been forgotten by the majority of the English public. For example, in his "Three Preludes on Welsh Hymn Tunes," he utilized pre-1800s hymns that had primarily been passed down through a vocal tradition. In the "Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis," he goes as far back as 1567, to the "Archbishop Parker's Psalter" for the melody that would dominate this well-known piece.

The utilization of patriotism as the driving force behind musical creativity is a difficult task. There is always the inner debate over the usage of the standard elements of the style they are writing for, and the aspects of their homeland that they seek to incorporate. In the case of Ralph Vaughan Williams, we see a composer who was fascinated by the folk songs of old England, a style that lacked the rules and elements of the standard classical repertoire. As such, building these themes upon the foundations of chamber and orchestral music would be quite difficult. However, Vaughan Williams was able to succeed at this task by using the folk songs as his base, and building the elements of the chamber group or the orchestra around their beautiful melodies.

In order to accomplish this, Vaughan Williams used the instrumentation of the group he was composing for to carry the folk song's tone as well as its theme. More specifically, each part in a Vaughan Williams piece behaves more like a human voice than like a manufactured instrument. Rather than using the instruments to paint the themes he wanted to convey, he first sought to make each instrument behave like a voice in the choir. Once this was accomplished, he could perform his folk songs without actually losing the human aspect of these sung parts. As a result, his solo passages become bleak and mysterious elegies of a lonely singer, his cheerful themes become lighthearted songs, and his grand entrances become choir performances at Gloucester Cathedral.

The Phantasy Quintet is an example of this style of composition. The "Phantasy Quintet" was composed in 1912 at the request of an English businessman named W.W. Cobbett. Cobbett had commissioned several such pieces with the intent of reviving a genre known as the "Elizabethan Fantasy," a four-movement piece similar to the "English Fancy," in which a single theme is held through four separate sections that make up the whole piece. In this case, the viola solo heard at the beginning of the first section is carried through the entire piece.

The first section begins with a mysterious solo theme that drips with Vaughan Williams' characteristic usage of the viola's sonority. This idea is further developed using the full force of the group, contrasting rapid violin passages with the

slow and thoughtful melodies of the cello and violas. This juxtaposition of these opposite ideas is a common theme in the English style of composing, which could be described as something both grounded and ethereal. Throughout this section, the relatively slow pace of the melody lends a feeling of “extended time” much as Vaughan Williams created two years earlier in his “Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis.”

The “Prelude” merges into a much livelier second movement. The “Scherzo” is quicker, with a bouncier texture introduced by the cello in the opening measures. The complex rhythm brings to mind the relaxed nature of a country-dance. The viola theme from the first movement is passed from instrument to instrument, as Vaughan Williams explores the full range of the ensemble’s various timbres. The final moments of the piece are signaled by the slow fading of the cello into the third movement.

The third section lacks the deep resonance of the cello from the previous sections, and instead explores the light and airy tones of the viola and violin. The ensemble explores a variation of the mysterious theme depicted in the first movement. The sound is muted and distant, as though we were simply hearing a distorted echo of the “Prelude,” with the same feeling of extended time.

Vaughan Williams ends the piece by introducing a new theme. Building a foundation on the reintroduced cello, he works his way up the instruments one by one until the entire group burst forth from the shy third movement and sings a new theme that brings up images of the English countryside. Even though this section is much grander than the first, it still utilizes the “extended time” that was distinctive to this period of Vaughan Williams’ work.

Vaughan Williams’ compositional genius was aptly used to portray a style of music that, although many had forgotten in favor of more formal pieces, were nonetheless the backbone of the English style of music. By integrating the familiar characteristics of modern and classical music into these beautiful folk songs, he was able to bring new life to these old themes and excite audiences across the globe with his patriotism.