

Music 155A

Joseph J. Wunderlich

Concert Review 1: Mark Sorensen and Shelly Moorman-Stahlman Organ and Alto Saxophone Senior Recital at Lebanon Vally College, Miller Chapel. Nov. 3, 2015 7:30 pm

Program:

1. Symphony No. 6 in G Minor Op. 42, No. 2, I. Allegro by Charles-Marie Widor

Mr. Sorensen begins playing an incredibly loud cord in G with a powerful bass. I noticed right away that he plays the lower notes with his feet. The intro is long and bold, every note reverberates through the upper level of the chapel I am sitting in as I write this. He stays in relatively the same area on the keyboard while making subtle changes to the cascading, repetitive intro that are hard to distinguish because of the volume. After about 2 minutes the intro ends as boldly as it began with a huge crescendo that was beginning to hurt my ears as I was adjusting.

2. Symphony No. 5 in F Minor Op. 42, No. 1, IV. Adagio by Charles-Marie Widor

Next he begins a fast paced back-and-forth crescendo with a growing pulse. There is a deep bass in this one that lowers as the high notes rise. Once and a while he will take a brief pause for emphasis while preparing for a diminuendo. This piece ends with a slowing 1,2,3..4...5.....6 pace and then closing with a single sudden bang on the high end.

3. Pastorale for Clarinet and Organ by Peter Mathews

The third piece Sorensen plays like a waltz with a droned out, slow descending pattern at a moderately slow tempo. Miss Morrman-starts playing right away in a powerfully tranquil, organic way. It is difficult to imagine where a song like this would be most in place in the world. This almost sounds like the soundtrack to a baroque castle-siege movie based in the late middle ages. The woman on the clarinet speeds up at the end of each chord until the end where the notes are all spaced apart equally. I would say this is by far my favorite performance of the night.

4. Praeludium in G (BWV 568) by J.S. Bach

This song opens with a tragic but divisive pace. It is hard to tell where this will go. This song sounds similar to a slow wedding opening or perhaps a peaceful church ceremony after the medium volume intro.

5. Rhapsodie for Eb Alto Saxophone and organ Op. 108A by Paul Creston

Here Is where I really got hooked. The organist starts a melancholy bass melody that sounds Egyptian-esque while the saxophonist joins in by chiming in about a split second after the organist finishes a chord at the lowest point. She compliments the way he plays well, their timing is very fluid and neither overpower on another. Halfway through this song begins to sound like the Dracula's castle theme with a sinister overtone. Near the end the song starts sounding a bit

jazzy with a slow pace and some quick chords. The climax is a fast paced, awkwardly jolly finish that doesn't give closure the same way the other pieces did.

6. Concert Variations on The Star-Spangled Banner Op. 23 by Dudley Buck

a. Theme

There isn't a whole lot to say about the first part here. It's the Star-Spangled Banner, but in organ form; not much else to say.

b. Variation III

Mr. Sorensen takes an interesting twist on the theme by adding an extra 6 or so notes to each chord, prolonging the song by about 2 minutes compared to the last.

c. Variation IV

About the same as variation III but with more notes and much louder. This version was so overcomplicated you could barely make out the original song.

d. Fughetta

This is a rich, deep variation that only has a few improvisations. It sounds like this entire version was played in a slightly lower key than the others giving a somewhat damp, cold feel.

e. Finale

The grand finale. Pretty fast and without many liberties taken to maintain fluency. The climax is stretched out really long here and had a similar problem as variation IV but also had some removed notes? The ending was played clear and at a good volume and pace at least. It seemed as if Mr. Sorensen was eager to finish at this point.

My Review:

1. Symphony No. 6 in G Minor Op. 42, No. 2, I. Allegro	8/10
2. Symphony No. 5 in F Minor Op. 42, No. 1, IV. Adagio	9/10
3. Pastorale for Clarinet and Organ	10/10
4. Praeludium in G (BWV 568)	10/10
5. Rhapsodie for Eb Alto Saxophone and organ Op. 108A	9/10
6. Concert Variations on The Star-Spangled Banner Op. 23	
a. Theme	10/10
b. Variation III	10/10
c. Variation IV	6/10
d. Fughetta	9/10
e. Finale	8/10

Total:..... **(B+) 89/100**

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Concert Review 2: Symphonic Band & Elizabethtown College Percussion Ensemble, Dr. Robert Spence, Conductor. Leffler Chapel, November 22, 2015 3:00 pm

Program:

1. Celebration Fanfare by Steven Reineke

A super deep bass plays every few seconds with a hum before it drops, suddenly great ceremonial chords start blaring. The piece starts off with a medieval theme, as if a king were entering a large city. The deeper wind instrument players flow smooth and fast. There is a cheery xylophone that joins in after about 1 minute that gives the song an awkwardly cheery feel to it. Halfway through the pace is slower now and I can sit back relaxed. Another sudden crescendo blasts everyone awake then tapers down to the winds again which bring the first piece to a close.

2. Suite Dreams by Steven Bryant

The opening here is a slow and eerie note played by a lower wind instrument in the back. The note is long and drawn out like the opening of a suspenseful movie. After a few minutes the song has not moved from its low creepy theme yet. Some bells are ringing in the background very lightly. The transitions are all very slow, nothing too surprising here. Finally there is a burst and everyone joins in for a great rising chord that sounds a little bit sad in contrast to the closing of the last song. The wavelike rising and falling of this song is better in my opinion because I don't have to worry when there is going to be a great crescendo that will startle me.

3. Armenian Dances (Part 1) by Alfred Reed

Another blast intro to a warm sinking drop from the winds. A saxophone leads a jazzy warm up before another quick crescendo similar to the opening. The song is rising and falling in a back and forth pattern; the winds go up, then the drums and low strings bring it back down in a fade. This song finishes quickly.

After a pause the next segment begins. A 1, 2, 123, 1, 2, 123 pace is the dominant feature of this song. I always imagine large men jumping up and down carrying logs in the mountains when there is a tempo and beat like this. The winds compliment the strong chords by joining in when there is a pause and closing with a drum roll before the next chord. This gives a very nice effect.

Now onto the third segment. A cheery, symbol crashing intro with a homey feel that brings me in to listen very closely. The pace is very consistent. Midway in the song the entire theme changes to what sounds like something played in a circus. There is a repetitive bass that is playing a different beat out of sync with the other instruments making this a confusing song to listen to now. The song gets louder and the same fast repeating chords begin to get very annoying. I could imagine this would be more pleasant to listen to if they had played this piece

more precisely as a whole. The cheery rises tend to follow a plateau of held notes on the high end with symbols defining each gap. The crescendos are made incomprehensible near the end because everyone seems eager to finish the song. Probably my favorite of the songs played this night looking back even though the band did not give it very good homage.

4. Ritmica V by Amedeo Roldan

I really don't know what to say about this one. Nearly all of the bad members have left the stage and now all I can see are a few drummers in the back and someone with a shaky rattling instrument. This sounds like an African tribal song played around a campfire; Everyone is doing their own thing but there is still some harmony to be heard. You really have to single out an individual instrument amongst the mess. The song ends abruptly.

5. Fanfare: 1 Chronicles 13:8 by James Territo

A thunderous steady opening raptures the quiet room and leaves the winds to gracefully jump and work their way back into the quiet by steadily dropping and holding their pace to a very quiet level. A strong drum dictates the song. Big repeating chords on the high end holding the song in high esteem end the song in just such a place, no drops this time.

6. Fancy Free by Leonard Bernstein, Arranged by John Krance

Foggy horns in the back bring about a cheery, low tone. Brief pauses between the low bass notes give this song a choppy feel rather than a smooth flowing one. Some very high winds begin a subtle cascading chord pattern that continues to drop as the bass rises. This goes on for another minute until the song finally ends.

7. Fantasy on a Theme of Samuel Barber, Arranged by Richard L. Saucedo

This song opens with a soft intro that I found very touching. My focus shifted to the light lonely single flute playing somewhere near the far back left. On the low end we have a crescendo building. A short pause leaves the room silent and waiting for something to break. This song ends on a falling scale similar to the intro.

8. Machu Picchu: City in the Sky by Satoshi Yagisawa

A speedy intro opens with grand chords, rising and falling slightly, still rising more than they fall. Pause and cure single low drummer shakes the floor with a between periodic cymbal crashes to emphasize every pause that isn't filled with a rising crescendo or high chord. There is a heavy bell in the back of the room that I head amongst the chaos several times. Suddenly pops and snaps can be heard and the bass and winds switch their theme to one of a more relaxed fashion. There is a pianist opposite to me on the far end of the room (I am sitting on the far right balcony) who only appears to be playing single defined notes every once and a while, but I can hardly hear. The climax is yet another slowly declining, deep tempo that raises for one last time to a bunch of incredibly loud cymbal crashes that made my ears ring. Horrible ending but a memorable tune overall.

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Listening Journal 1: Concerto pour clavier No. 1 in D Minor, BWV 1052: I. Allegro

Several strings and a piano begin to build in a fugue and at the top of a third repetition, cascade down to a more subtle start to what sounds like another build up. The pianist grows on the piano, moving his way slowly up the piano but speedily completing the end of each chord as if he were trying to finish a sentence as quickly as possible to move on while simultaneously getting quieter. The pianist puts significant accent on the first notes at the start and then more and more on the middle beats in a wavelike pattern. They do a great job keeping the pace steady while changing volume dramatically. The strings in the background around 2:44 compliment the keys well because there is cute accompanying bit that really brings out the best in the piano. The tempo slows in just the right spots to grab your attention then ring you awake. It finishes by tapering off to a quick and quite false-ish ending and then allegro where all the instruments join in. The finale is the strings going down up then down again.

Link to the version of the piece I listened to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tSg-mBIFDW0>

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Listening Journal 2: Beethoven Piano Sonata No. 17 in D minor: Movement 1 Largo - Allegro

This piece starts off adagissimo then abruptly picks up pace and turns sforzando at about 30 seconds in and lasts for about 20 seconds, becoming gradually slower for an instant then growing again in speed but becoming quieter. At 1:40 The song is uneasily drifting between quiet and loud. It is hard to know where it would go from here beforehand. The Intro finishes at 2:20. 3:30 Onward keeps a steady pace and Beethoven holds a consistent position on the piano. A low, low, low, high, low pattern is the defining pattern so far. The third portion of the song begins at 4:20, halfway into the song. Beethoven once again employs a *accompanato*, slowing the pace and moving down the piano slowly and jolting you awake once again. Around 6:30 the song slows to a near halt and the fourth part begins. Here, he repeats the beginning of the intro. After 8:30 things get interesting as the song begins to sound like jazz for a short period.

Link to the version of the piece I listened to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KR1Kts3pnHk>

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Listening Journal 3: Chopin Ballades: No. 1 Op. 23 in G minor by Emanuel Ax

Chopin begins with a light and cheerful decrescendo in a romantic, waltz. A crescendo builds at 1:30 moving up the keys. Around 2:00 Chopin jumps around almost experimentally with the pace. At 2:25 the song becomes aggressively fast, *allegro*. Now at 3:00 we're back to a nice relaxing pastoral feel. It's too slow to dance to but would make a good soundtrack to an argument between a husband and wife in an 1910's Italian silent movie. Around five minutes in and I can imagine a couple making up, but wait, someone is chasing them. 5:47 is a great example of a chase theme. 6:20 begins to get a tad speratic, some of the charm is lost here. I had to turn the volume on my headphones down from this part to about 7:00. 7:30 is by far my favorite. There is a harmony there that I happily replayed several times. Chopin begins to pound a bit too hard from 8:20 onwards but eases up along the way becoming quieter at a very subtle pace. You can tell the song is coming to an end. The finale at 9:10 is a false one, but I wasn't surprised considering how much Chopin loves to trick you like this. 9:20 is one crescendo too many for me. I was eager for the song to finish at this point. 9:40 really got on my nerves. I turned my headset up beforehand not expecting yet one final blow to my ears. All and all this is an excellent song to listen to while working or working out, but too boisterous and unpredictable to play at a party or to dance to. Otherwise an excellent, tragic, energetic piece.

Link to the version of the piece I listened to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyWmIGtDCjE>

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Listening Journal 4: Debussy: Suite Bergamasque - 3. Clair de lune by Jean-Yves Thibaudet

This piece starts off at a romantic and tranquil pace with brief *calando* intervals. Debussy is in no hurry, in fact the pace is similar to that of a lullaby. After 1:00 he begins to pick up the pace and volume ever so slightly coming to a peak at 1:40, then gently brushing down the keys before changing the pace again at 1:50. Debussy makes good use of *rubato*. 2:45 to 3:00 is a great example of this, as well as 0:30 to 0:50. When he plays the keys gently from 3:05 to 3:15 it reminds me of the tapping of rain on an awning, inconsistent but not so random as to have no detectable pattern. Throughout the entire piece he rolls up and down exponentially; spreading out the pace each measure. One problem with this particular performance is that unlike Beethoven or Chopin, Debussy doesn't have as much variation throughout his pieces. He certainly shows the many different ways a scale can be expressed. Paying homage to the same brief set of chords in enough ways to keep interest just long enough. His song is catchy and easy to pick up on, albeit repetitive.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3oXhEW9Fpo>

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Listening Journal 5: Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No. 1

I could recognize the grand and harmonious opening of this piece the very first moment I heard it. The first 10 seconds defines this song the most. The virtuoso Tchaikovsky plays in a defined and clear manor all the way to 1:30 where he begins to roll quickly down the keys, inching his way back up and all the way down at 2:00. At 3:30 the whole show is playing very quiet. Halfway through now the song has taken a turn for the quick and cheery. He plays low and fast on the keys around 5:55 and stays quiet all together for a bit until 6:30 where he manages to bring the whole theme to a lighthearted tone after joining in again. After this point it seems as though the symphony is slowing to a finish. Most of the larger instruments have left the stage and its only the piano and some strings now. It's clear that we're nearing the climax at 8:00 and he's booking it. At his loudest the accompanying orchestra waits its turn to jump in quickly between his rests. This is especially defined between 8:25 and 8:30. The orchestra falls quiet and Tchaikovsky finishes off this gorgeous chantey the best way he knows how.

Some of Tchaikovsky's methods work so well that they are worth discussing. For one, he is excellent at transitioning between themes of bold, grandiose explosiveness and woeful defeat. The kind of music he plays is the kind you would expect at an Olympic games, or perhaps to an army that has just captured a famous city. My favorite method of his ability is to play the piano passionately but in harmony with the other instruments, which I think makes him stand out from the rest. Whereas in many other symphonies the pianist is the domineering center of attention. He plays the intro in %50 on the keys for clarity and definition like a machine gun. Overall, my favorite artist of all time, right behind Chucho Valdez in terms of style and grace. Truly a piece that can never get old.

Significant moments:

0:14 – 0:45 The legendary harmonious intro that really sets the song in motion.

1:10 – 1:20 The brass in the background almost mockingly mimics the pianist.

2:00 – 2:20 Contrasting highs and lows, back and forth.

2:27 – Tchaikovsky's second coming

3:40 – Once everything has slowed down trumpets join in, changing the feel from “a battle has just begun” to “the war has finally ended”.

4:40 – It's hard to tell if he is trying the keep the theme melancholy or lighthearted.

6:30 – Everything is peaceful once again, but with a slightly sadder adagio

8:10 – The orchestra is gearing up(or should I say down) for the finale.

Link to shorter version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWerj8FcprM>

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Listening Journal 6: Albéniz: Iberia by Alicia de Larrocha

The entirety of this song is lamentful and warm with few builds or escapades. The pianist noticeably speeds up and slows down during the more complex measures. You can tell that there is a bit of relaxed period after each of the defining moments of the song. The first half of the song paints a picture that is disorganized and organic. Very few patterns are noticeable except for quick impulsive measures from time to time. It is worth stressing just how warm this piece really is. I get a very relaxed, homey vibe that lasts for the majority of my listening. This song would perfectly fit a countryside setting in Italy or Spain, though I say that partially because that is what the front cover of this album portrays. Despite having very few defined patterns or pounded crescendos, aside from 3:00, this piece is memorable and unique.

Key moments:

0:00 – 0:40 The intro is rather sad. There is not much sign of a crescendo or quick pace.

1:10 Some enthusiasm is present here but it quickly is replaced with a sadder tone emerges around 1:40.

3:10 The pianist taps lightly around here in a way that makes me think there is a bug on the keys.

3:30 Song becomes slightly depressing again.

3:55 It's hard to say why, but this part of the song is very endearing.

4:50 The song changes in an intriguing way. The beginning of this snippet gives a false idea of what to expect.

5:10 The misleading first measures end and give way to an almost upbeat, though still slow ending. 5:25 Onward and the song finishes slowly and gracefully.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YXSOiIAEK84>

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Listening Journal 7: Brahms: Piano Concerto No. 1 in D, No. 3 Rondo, Allegro non troppo

This fast paced track begins with a quick piano solo in the higher keys. About 15 seconds in the strings join in for a brief interlude before the pianist takes the stage again. A key style in this song is a crescendo and a slight drop before a large drop, like that of a rollercoaster. What really distinguishes this piece from others like it is its smooth transitions. While listening, I found that I would lose track of my place because of how gradual the changes in tempo were. The shakiness in the strings before a build is something really special. A long, repetitive piece but a great listen. The relaxing troughs almost make you want to fall asleep.

Key moments:

0:34 There is a back and forth, rhythm going on here in the bass.

8:20 – 8:50 The piece takes on a medieval feel with trumpets and a deep horn in the background.

10:50 A rather uninteresting outro, I had not felt the same sense of closure I was expecting.

Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hO_p26yW-AY

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Listening Journal 8: Lynne Arriale - Mountain of the Nigh

The opening is soft and a tad lamentful but I am at ease just listening to this for the first time. It is quiet theraputic. The chords she is playing are new to me, there is a small build and then this hard to describe oddly satisfying quick jump between two notes at the end of said chord. The song is a little warm and just deep enough to make me imagine a nighttime setting. There is a comforting vibe in the way the drummer taps the symbols between the highs of the pianist. This particular song would be fitting in a fine restuaurant or perhaps a server lobby or the a solid gold elevator. This song loops very well, by this I mean that similar to a tiled wallpaper, It can be repeated several times and not become unpleasent. My favourite LJ so far.

Key moments:

5:00 The focus on the drummer playing with his bare hands was interesting to me. He appears to have much more control this way and the effect is nice.

6:00 The light tapping makes for quick and energizing, well defined short solo.

7:30 As the tempo begins to snow down, the chelloist plays a tad deeper and the drummer almost goes completely silent for emphasis that we're nearing the climax.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wOx5ZWVn8p0>

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Listening Journal 9: Chucho Valdes & Archie Shepp - Afro-cuban project

Opening is void of anything grand and gets right to the point. The pianist, Chucho Valdes, begins with a choppy unpredictable jazzy chord which he plays in one specific place in what sounds like D position. The whole scene is lively and upbeat while at the same time casual. The beat is similar to a mariachi band with it's lagging tempo. The entirety of the song is a bit repetitive. It takes some close listening to hear the slight improvisations Valdes employs over the course of this jazz session. Mr. Shepp plays the sax in long breaths starting on lower notes and working up, then back down again. There is some noticable overlap between background instruments that makes this piece an effort to take in all in one go. Every instrument at one point or another gets their own solo.

Key moments:

0:40 – A long sax solo

4:14 – Trumpet solo

4:40 – Mr. Valdes has his time to shine on this song's climax solo

5:08 – He speeds up almost 2x the regular tempo which draws attention to his skill

7:28 – An abrupt end with a simple rising chord for closure.

Review:

A passionate and well planned band project. Also very well rounded, everyone got their chance to play and each performer played at an appropriate volume so as to not overpower one another, the timing was key. I wish I could have been sitting in the audience this time around to take in the mood that I could feel sitting behind a screen.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3iFboeGRhE>

