

Graduate Recital

James Cookinham, trombone

Dr. Natalia Bolshakova, piano

Program Notes

Sonata in Es by Gottfried Finger (1660-1730)

Finger was born around 1660 in Moravia—modern-day Czech Republic.¹ His musical career took hold in 1685 when he immigrated to England and served as a court musician under King James II. After this appointment, Finger spent several years in Berlin where he began to compose German operas, though his output is most remembered by his works for solo instruments and chamber ensembles. *Sonata in Es* is most likely transcribed from a sonata for bass and continuo contained in the collection *Sonatae XII pro diversis instrumentis* for various solo string instruments and continuo. The sonata follows the standard Baroque era form, consisting of four movements. The first movement serves as a prelude, with the second forming a minuet without a trio. The third and fourth movements are performed without a break. These two movements start as a short *adagio* that then transitions into a gigue—a Baroque Era dance in a compound meter.

Sonata for Trombone by John Stevens (b. 1951)

John Stevens is primarily known for his compositions for tuba, trombone, and euphonium. He previously served on the faculty of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The *Sonata for Trombone* was written for and premiered by Mark Fisher, a trombonist who performs in both the Chicago Lyric and Santa Fe Operas.² The work is intended to showcase the trombone's ability to display power, lyricism, and technical prowess.³ Stevens uses the whole range of the instrument, writes long and expressive lines, and employs techniques such as double tonguing, and *fp* accents to create energy and power. Additionally, he creates an environment in which the player can not only explore the peak of dynamics of the instrument, but also the gentlest dynamics possible. For example, while the first movement exemplifies the trombone's ability to command a room with a bombastic sound, the second movement is a study in the quiet intimacy the instrument can produce. A sparse piano part allows the soft timbre of the instrument to resonate through this movement. Finally, the third movement employs the fast and technical side of the instrument. It is here where the player is able to show a mastery of the slide.

¹ Gottfried Finger, *Sonata in Es* (Vuarmarens, Switzerland: Editions Bim, 1981), 1.

² ClassicsOnline, "John Stevens," Naxos Digital Services, 2012, <https://web.archive.org/web/20120226190908/http://www.classicsonline.com/composerbio/28745.htm>

³ John Stevens, *Sonata for Trombone* (Vuarmarens, Switzerland: Editions Bim, 2004), 1.

Extase by Emmett Yoshioka (b. 1944)

Emmett Yoshioka is a multi-instrumentalist who holds two degrees in composition from the University of Southern California. He currently resides in Hawaii.⁴ *Extase* is a work for unaccompanied trombone. Yoshioka employs an arch form for the structure of this piece. The first A section is an exploration of soft lines in the low register of the instrument. This gives way to a B section that moves into the upper limits of both range and volume of the trombone. It concludes with a *ritardando* and *decrescendo* back into the low register. Yoshioka begins the C section in a manner that completely departs from what was presented before. The new material invokes the composer's Japanese heritage with a serene and contemplative melody in a comfortable register of the trombone. This melody is disrupted, however, and turns into a violent flurry of notes that reach a climax in the upper register. From this peak, the piece returns to a more relaxed sound and returns to material from the B section. The B section builds energy similar to before but this time culminates in a *fortissimo* return to the material from the A section. After the A section's theme is finished, the piece softens and fades into nonexistence.

Concertino for Trombone by Josef Novakovsky (1800-1865)

A Polish composer, Josef Novakovsky composed during the early Romantic Era. His music takes great influence from his friend, and fellow countryman, Frédéric Chopin. After touring Europe—including several stays in Paris—Novakovsky spent his later years in his native Poland.⁵ *Concertino* was written during an emergence of new trombone literature in the early nineteenth-century. After a long period of obscurity, the trombone had reemerged into the public consciousness, thanks to soloists such as Karl Traugott Quisser (1800–1846) and Friedrich August Belke (1795–1874). They created a demand for quality solo works.⁶ *Concertino* was likely written with one of these soloists in mind. The piece begins with an operatic introduction and quickly moves to a theme and variations. The theme is a Polish mazurka—a type of dance in a compound meter. Each of the three succeeding variations embellishes the theme with arpeggiations, flowing and connective lines, and scalar flourishes. The second movement is a slow and impassioned *adagio*. The work concludes with a brisk polka finale. This exciting dance features rapid arpeggiations and constant syncopation to bring the piece to an exciting close.

⁴ LinkedIn, “Emmett Yoshioka,” www.Linkedin.com, 2021, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/emmett-yoshioka-44557915>.

⁵ Theodore Baker, *A Bibliographic Dictionary of Musicians*, (New York: G. Schirmer, 1900), 439.

⁶ Trevor Herbert, *The Trombone* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 144.

La Femme a Barbe by José Berghmans (1921-1992)

Berghmans was a French composer whose work included many foreign films. *La Femme a Barbe* is a movement from the work *Tableaux Forains*—literally translated as “fairground paintings.” The overall work features solo instruments depicting various aspects of a circus-like event. Several movements, including *La Femme a Barbe*, were also published independently from the whole work for solo performances. The piece is set in three sections: a somber and reflective opening, a bright and entertaining middle, and a return to the somber beginning. *La Femme a Barbe* serves as a reflection of the life of a bearded lady of that time: isolated from society, displayed for public amusement, and finally returning to isolation when the show is over.

Two Latin Dances by Lauren Bernofsky (b. 1967)

Dr. Bernofsky was born in Minnesota. Her travels and musical career have taken her all over the globe. She holds degrees from the Hartt School, New England Conservatory, and Boston Conservatory.⁷ *Two Latin Dances* was commissioned and premiered by trombonist Natalie Mannix at the 2016 International Trombone Festival and was later recorded on her album *Breaking Ground: A Celebration of Women Composers*.⁸ The work features two South American dance styles: the bossa nova and tango. Bernofsky embodies the popular bossa nova style by implementing its relaxed demeanor and use of long and flowing lines. To express the tango, she uses a bright tempo and syncopated rhythms to create the energy typical of the passionate dance. However, rather than just conform to the standards of the two styles, the composer injects her own signature complex timing and harmonies into the work. Rarely is the piano simply a basic accompaniment to the trombone. Rather, dissonant harmonies add color and highly syncopated rhythms add excitement and tension throughout the piece.

⁷ Lauren Bernofsky, “Lauren Bernofsky: Composer,” Self-published, 2021, <http://www.laurenbernofsky.com/bio.php>

⁸ Lauren Bernofsky, *Two Latin Dances* (Stockholm, Sweden: Merion Music, 2017), 1.

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Stevens, John. *Sonata for Trombone*. Vuarmarens, Switzerland: Editions Bim, 2004.