

**Senior Recital**

**Matthew Barnes, *oboe and English horn***  
**Natalia Bolshakova, *piano***

**April 8th, 2023**

**3:30 p.m.**

**Sheryl Crow Hall**

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**Program**

**Sonata in G Minor, BWV 1030b (1735)**

Andante

Largo

Presto

**J. S. Bach**

(1685-1750)

***Eclogue, Op. 12 (1900) for English horn***

**Theodore Akimenko**

(1876-1945)

**Intermission**

***Wood Song (2019)***

**Jenni Brandon**

(b. 1977)

**Introduction, Theme and Variations, op. 102 (1823/24)**

**Johann N. Hummel**

(1778-1837)

Matthew Barnes is a student of Dan Willett.  
Recital presented as the Capstone Project for the Bachelor of Music in Oboe Performance.

## Sonata in G Minor

Although he was admired by his contemporaries primarily as an outstanding harpsichordist, organist, and expert on organ building, Bach is now generally regarded as one of the greatest composers of all time. At the age of 10, both his parents had died, and he was looked after by his oldest brother, Johann Christoph, an organist. At the age of 18, he was appointed organist at Arnstadt, a new church with a brand-new organ that he helped test out. He remained here until the age of 22 devoting himself to keyboard music.

Around 1717, Prince Leopold of Köthen hired Bach as *Kapellmeister* (director of music) and gave him the freedom to explore compositionally. With this newly acquired liberty, Bach turned his attention to composing secular music. When Bach moved to Leipzig (1723-1750) to become the director of music for the city's two main cathedrals, his secondary duty was as director of the *Collegium Musicum* which was a collective of university students who were uniquely talented young musicians. Two of them, Caspar Gleditsch and Gottfried Kornagel, were oboists. It was during this time that Bach wrote the Sonata in G minor. Commonly known amongst the flute community as the Sonata in B minor, this piece was assumed to have been composed for the flute. Musicologists contend that the autograph copy of the B minor sonata dates from around 1735, although the piece was likely transposed from an earlier version in G minor.

In the early 70's, the version in G minor, was published by editor Raymond Meylan. It had been long recognized that there was a previous version of this piece that was lost, and the flute arrangement is what we had left. Meylan took many different manuscripts and combined them together to form this version, which is now commonly believed to be an accurate representation of the original.

Written for solo oboe, harpsichord, and viola da gamba, this piece is comprised of three movements. The harpsichord is different from typical baroque keyboard parts because of the obligato writing (nothing needs to be played in addition to the written music). All movements have been given names in the B minor flute edition which will be used henceforth. The first movement, Andante, is set in ritornello form. Much longer than a typical baroque era sonata movement, this movement seems almost relentless in the melodic lines that continue seemingly forever.

The second movement, Largo, contrasts the first in almost every way. A short, lyrical movement in binary form provides a lovely and much needed break for the soloist and listener.

The third movement, Presto, is a two-part movement composed of a fugue and a technical gigue-like section in binary form. The theme of the three-voice fugue is introduced at the start of the movement in the oboe. In this section the left and right hand represent separate voices filling in the rest of the three-voices. After this section, the style takes a turn and we are introduced to the final section of the piece, the gigue. In this section we get lots of interesting syncopation and technically demanding rhythms in the solo line.

## *Eclogue*

The older brother of Yakov Yakimenko, better known as Yakiv Stepovy, who was also a composer, Theodore (Feodor) was born in the village of Pisky near the city of Kharkov in the

Russian Empire in 1876. At the age of ten, he joined the Royal Chapel of Saint Petersburg. There, he was a pupil of renowned composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and Mily Balakirev. In 1895, he entered the composition class at the Superior Conservatory of Saint Petersburg. From 1903 to 1906, he lived in France before returning to Ukraine. From 1903 to 1914 he taught at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory. There, he was one of Igor Stravinsky's first composition teachers.

Fleeing the Russian Revolution, Théodore briefly went to France in 1924, before emigrating to Prague that same year. He directed the faculty of music at the Ukrainian Pedagogical Institute of Mykhailo Drahomanov until 1926. In 1925, Akimenko published his Practical Course in Musical Harmony in Prague. Not much is known about the last two decades of his life. His last known piece was published in 1939. He is a part of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century neoromantic school influenced by impressionist techniques.

This piece is written in two contrasting sections. A slow, mournful melody and a slightly more optimistic, moving melody. The piece is dedicated as an Elegy, but there is little information available to know to whom or what it might have been dedicated.

## ***Wood Song***

### *From the Composer*

Jenni Brandon is a composer and conductor, creating music in collaboration with other musicians and artists. She has written over 50 works, telling stories through memorable musical lines influenced by nature and poetry. Commissioned to write music from solo to orchestral works, her music appears on over 20 albums. Her music has been awarded the Sorel Medallion, American Prize, Paderewski Cycle, Women Composers Festival of Hartford International Competition, and Bassoon Chamber Music Composition Competition among others. As a conductor she conducted her one-act opera 3 PADEREWSKIS in the Terrace Theater at the Kennedy Center in 2019. She also presents workshops on collaboration and the business of music, striving to create a supportive environment where collaboration leads to an exploration of ideas.

Wood Song was inspired by the Sara Teasdale poem of the same name. I was particularly drawn to this poem for both the reference to the wood thrush bird as well as the poet's honest of kissing life "scars and all". The colors of the oboe lend themselves to creating this bird's ethereal and mysterious sounds, and of telling the journey of a soul through poem and music.

Among the many unique sounds made by this bird includes the "pit volley". This sound is represented in the work by five quick repeated notes in a row punctuating the moment as the wood-thrush does in the forest. Variations on other unique sounds from the wood thrush's repertoire are represented by both timbal and regular trills, fast rhythmic leaping lines, and, at times, the lyrical singing of a lone bird in the woods. In remaining true to both the bird's call as well as the poet's description of it, the very opening of the work begins with a transition of one of these bird's songs "twirling three notes". Throughout the work there is much freedom given to the oboist to explore creating the song of the wood thrush. Listen for variations and interpretations on their unique song.

*I first came across this piece a few years back when I was listening to the winning recordings of a solo competition I had entered. I heard a stunning performance from a collegiate oboist a few years older than I was at the time. I was blown away by this piece and the talent the oboist brought to it. I rediscovered this piece last year when planning for my trip to the International Double Reed Society Conference in Boulder, CO. This piece was featured as one of the repertoire choices for the preliminary round of the Norma Hooks Young Artist Competition for Oboe. While I did not compete in this competition, it did remind me of this piece and sparked an interest in pursuing the piece. I purchased this copy of the music while at the conference and quickly decided that I wanted to program it on my upcoming recital. The addition of multimedia is something I have been brainstorming since last semester. As far as I know, no one has ever done anything like this when performing this piece. The piece was commissioned by Dr. Lindabeth Binkley at Central Michigan University. I was able to speak with Dr. Binkley in my preparations for this performance and I'd like to thank her for her informative feedback on the piece.*

## **Introduction, Theme, and Variations**

Johann Nepomuk Hummel was born on November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1778 (222 years to the day before I was born) in Bratislava in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in what would become Slovakia. While his grandfather was a farmer, his father was sent to study music and became a violinist. As a child Johann Hummel was obsessed with music and took his musical education very seriously from a young age, enthusiastically performing violin on the street to much encouragement of his neighbors. This habit ended, however, when a classmate began to tease him and critique his playing, awakening a rage in Johann to the point of attacking his critic with his violin. After this episode Hummel became a bit reclusive and devoted himself to the harpsichord and pianoforte.

His incredible talent and interest in music was recognized by his father. He took Johann to visit Mozart in Vienna and learn from the master. Mozart enthusiastically took Johann on as a student after hearing him play, sight read, and improvise at the pianoforte under the condition that Mozart would house and care for him as his own son. For a little over a year from ages 10-11, Hummel was part of the Mozart household and was cared for and educated by Wolfgang and his wife. It was during this internship that Hummel must have met several great composers such as Haydn, who he would meet again in London later in life, and musical critics such as the famous Charles Burney. This legacy of being Mozart's pupil would serve him well for the remainder of his life.

As Hummel grew to be a great performer he began touring across Europe, with the support of his father, and became well-known as a pianist and acclaimed improviser. While this practice may have been common for gifted child musicians of the time and parallels Mozart's childhood, Hummel was able to maintain an excellent relationship with his father. It was during a tour to London that he met Haydn who lavished praise onto the young Hummel. This meeting would forebode a close working association later in the life of both composers.

In adulthood Hummel composed many well-received works such as his trumpet concerto, piano trios, sacred works, works for solo piano, and many operas. While many delighted in his long phrases and Mozart-like elegance, his style was criticized as being too of the "old school" and was often compared unfavorably to the innovations of Beethoven, with

whom he had a complicated friendship. The legacy of being Mozart's pupil proved to be a double-edged sword.

Hummel had great reverence for Beethoven's talents and while they often had conflict, they remained close until the end of Beethoven's life. Beethoven often affectionately referred to Hummel and his talent as a first rate improviser. In one particular episode, the young Schubert came to visit Beethoven. Hummel heard one of Schubert's arias being performed after which Hummel improvised a fantasy based on the melody of the aria to the delight of all present.

Hummel would later be employed by the prince of Esterhazy as Haydn's assistant and would eventually replace the master after his death in 1809. Eventually domestic issues distracted Hummel from his post, and he was dismissed in 1811 for neglecting his duties. He then moved to Stuttgart and later Weimar, working many posts as a freelance and entrepreneurial musician. This was his most productive period, and it was in one of these cities that the Introduction, Theme and Variations for Oboe was produced.

Later in his life he established concert series and promoted instrumental music as a stand-alone art form. He maintained working associations with Schumann and Paganini and can be credited with advancing the movement to protect composer's work in terms of copyright. When he died at age 54, he was renowned as a pianist, often compared to Liszt and Chopin. Though his compositions did not become mainstream after his death, recent recording and concert projects have reawakened public awareness of his art.

This virtuosic showpiece is meant to display the technical abilities of the soloist. The piece is set up in three main sections, accurately described by the title. The opening of the piece, a slow introduction in F minor, is vastly different from the rest of the piece. In this section the music weaves through the solo and accompaniment without providing the listeners with a clear thematic line. The soloist can relax and darken the music to create contrast with the sections to follow.

Following the introduction, we are finally introduced to a simple playful theme that will be explored throughout the piece. After this brief statement of the theme, we are quickly introduced to variations. Each of the four variations is written in binary form, with each section being repeated, allowing the soloist to ornament and explore the variations themselves the second time through.

Following the variations, the piece enters a development phase with lots of back-and-forth action between the solo line and the accompaniment. Following a short cadenza, we are reintroduced to the original theme and a couple more variations. The finale of the piece is Hummel's way of letting the soloist show off their technical abilities in a flashy way to tie together the entirety of the concerto.