Logan Slansky - Piano
Music Education Degree Recital

University of Delaware
Gore Recital Hall - Center for the Arts
Saturday, 4/29/2023
8:00 P.M.

Ballade
Claude Debussy
(1862 - 1918)

La danse de Puck

Bruyères

China Gates
John Adams
b. 1947

Jamaican Dance No. 2
Oswald Russell
(1933 - 2012)

Nimble Feet from Dances in the Canebrakes
Florence B. Price
(1887 - 1953)

Intermission

Emily
Johnny Mandel and Johnny Mercer
(1925 - 2020) and (1909 - 1976)

Seeker
Hiromi Uehara
b. 1979

Mirage
Logan Slansky
b. 2002

Trevor Otto, Drums
Lawrence Trice, Bass
Ballade

Claude Debussy was a French Composer of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He is often considered the first composer of Impressionist music, though he was not a fan of the term when used to describe his works. His style is profoundly illustrative, frequently drawing inspiration from scenes of nature, characters from literary works, and aspects of European folktales and legends, to name a few. Debussy wrote “Ballade slave” in 1890, upon returning to Paris. Debussy had resided in Russia briefly during his teenage years, which some theorize is the reason behind this original title. It was republished simply as “Ballade,” and received broad recognition for its ardent, yet melancholic tone. Debussy incorporated a style of pedaling based on what he observed from a piano recital given by Franz Liszt at the French Academy in Rome. The Ballade demonstrates this intention with the creation of rich textures and soaring melodies that give the piece life and breath.

La danse de Puck

In contrast to Bruyères, La danse de Puck conveys a more specific character throughout its length. In Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Puck is a mischievous magical being that resembles a fairy, sprite, or jester. Throughout the play, he jokes with the audience, mocks various characters, and even turns someone’s head into that of a donkey. The comically articulate and wildly unpredictable nature of this piece falls perfectly in line with Puck’s character. Though there are a seemingly endless number of twists and turns throughout, the light-hearted and joking personality remains consistent, perfectly capturing the essence of our beloved Puck.

Bruyères

Bruyères, which translates to Heather, a type of pinkish-purple flower, is a tranquil and introspective prelude that paints the picture of a flourishing pasture in late summer or early fall. The composition is fairly diatonic, with a clear melody that guides the listener through the scene from its delicate opening to its serene ending.

China Gates

John Coolidge Adams is an American composer whose music is often considered synonymous with the concept of minimalism. His music experiments with modality, contrasts between light and dark soundscapes, and trance-like rhythmic repetition. In China Gates, a single-movement composition is divided into distinct modal areas that create a rich, colorful sonic atmosphere, supported by extended pedaling that allows figures to bleed into each other. The delicate upper voices and dark bass notes interact with each other to create vast, exposed textures that feel
entirely unique. A diagram provided in the sheet music approximately plots the modal changes throughout the piece as “gates.”

Jamaican Dance No. 2

Oswald Russell was a Jamaican pianist, composer, and educator whose life’s work involved facilitating classical music education in his native country. Drawing upon influence from traditional hymns and spirituals, Romantic piano works, and the music of his own Jamaican heritage, his Jamaican Dance No. 2 presents a stunning melody supported by a moving bass-line and conversation between the inner voices. A repeated figure in the right hand is the first and last sound heard in the piece, creating a wonderfully cyclical and serene experience from start to finish. Russell’s notable accessibility as a composer is on full display in this piece, as a familiar melody and accompaniment texture takes the listener to the beautiful landscapes of Jamaica.

Nimble Feet

Florence Beatrice Price was an American composer, pianist, organist, and music teacher, as well as the first African-American woman to be recognized as a symphonic composer. Though her musical training came from European tradition, her music took deep influence from the American South. She incorporated elements from African-American spirituals to create interesting rhythmic syncopations that are audible throughout. Nimble Feet is from a larger work entitled Dances in the Canebrakes, her last composition before she passed away in 1953. In line with the title, this selection is playful and jubilant; it features a beautifully contrasting middle section before the main theme is reiterated on a much larger scale.