Program Notes

Sonate für Harfe (1939)
Paul Hindemith (1895 – 1963)
Dedicated to Clelia Gatti-Aldrovandi
Program Notes by Jillian Risigari-Gai

In 1939, Hindemith was newly arrived in America, a refugee from Hitler’s Nazi Germany. Although Hindemith was not Jewish, his music had been banned since 1934 in Germany. He continued his work on two major cycles while in America: a series of concerti for various instruments and a parallel series of sonatas for solo instruments and piano. This cycle extended over fifteen years and he composed more than a dozen sonatas, including the harp sonata. The third movement of the sonata is based on the German poem “Lied” by Ludwig Christoph Heinrich Hölty (1748–1776).

Translation of Lied:

O my friends, when I am dead and gone,
Hang the little harp there behind the altar
Where on the wall the shimmering half-light catches
The funeral wreaths of many a departed maiden.

Then the good sexton will show the little harp
To visitors, stirring it to sound
As he touches the red riband that hangs from the harp
And floats beneath the golden strings.

“Often,” he says in wonder, “at sunset,
The strings unbidden murmur like humming bees:
The children, called hither from the churchyard,
Have heard it, and seen the wreaths a-queriver.”

Sequenza II for Solo Harp (1963)
Luciano Berio (1925 – 2003)
Dedicated to Francis Pierre
Program notes by Jacqueline Marshall with excerpts from Lou Anne Neill’s The Harp In Contemporary Chamber and Solo Music (1971)

“I have listened to colour - chains, muscular, aggressive
I have touched your rough, rigid resonances.”

-Edoardo Sanguineti, preface to "Sequenza II" for harp
With Berio’s permission and blessing, Italian poet Edoardo Sanguineti composed poetry to precede each of the Sequenzas in 1994-1995. Edoardo wrote, as a preface to the collection of sequenzas, “here begins the sequence of sequences, which is the music of music according to Luciano.”

Between 1998 and 2002, Berio wrote 14 Sequenzas for solo instruments (Sequenza X for trumpet also involves piano, but it is used only as a resonator). In these sequenzas, Berio explores instrumental virtuosity. Berio redefines virtuosity as not only physical agility, but also as a mental dexterity capable of understanding, confronting and successfully conveying complexity.

From *The Harp in Contemporary Chamber and Solo Music* by Lou Anne Neill (1971)

The dramatic power of Sequenza II is embodied in the gradual and virtuosic illumination of the harp’s resources. The gradual unfolding of its character is organized according to the principles of the traditional musical sequence. In this case, one musical event – the multi-dimensional unison – is sequentially developed on three levels of sound: pitch, indefinite pitch and discrete pitch variation. These organizing factors are further unified by the pitch relationships within the composition—specifically, the pitches revolve around the tones F sharp, F natural, E natural and E flat. These two strings on the harp – E1 and F1 – are the mid-point in the range of strings. Thus Berio begins and constantly returns to the central point on the instrument.

The sound levels are examined in detail on the harp in five movements (unmarked) and a coda. In general, each movement emphasizes one level of sound:

Movement I: definition of pitch; two-voice texture
Movement II: definition of pitch; one-voice texture
Movement III: definition of indefinite pitch; two-voice texture
Movement IV: definition of discrete pitch variation; one-voice texture
Movement V: definition of pitch; two-voice texture
Coda: definition of pitch; two-voice texture

**Towards the Sea III (1989)**
Toru Takemitsu (1930 – 1996)
Program Notes by Jacqueline Marshall

Toru Takemitsu’s *Towards the Sea III* was commissioned in 1981 by Greenpeace for its Save the Whales campaign. The piece was originally scored for guitar and alto flute, and a version for harp and alto flute was published in 1989.
The piece embodies a strong theme that recurs in many of Takemitsu’s works: the sea. Takemitsu developed a musical cipher using the notes Eb – E – A to spell S – E – A (in German E = es). Takemitsu planned to use this as a basis for a “sea of tonality,” and the cipher is used in many of his works, including *Towards the Sea III*.

*Towards the Sea III* unfolds in three movements entitled The Night, Moby Dick and Cape Cod. The movements have more linear direction and hints of a more traditional tonality than many of Takemitsu’s early works. Nonetheless, the piece still exists in a very free rhythmic and tonal space, with very few bar lines. The first movement utilizes specialized ways of playing the flute including hollow tones, flutter tonguing and overtones production to evoke a sense of nature and the organic world. The mysterious gestures used by both instruments create a dark, calming effect and evoke an image of the sea at night. The second movement contains loose interpretations of triple meter, the meter usually associated with sailing songs. The third movement includes numerous polyrhythms and meter juxtapositions and moves through rich harmonic areas, winding down over time and concluding with the SEA cipher.

**Präludium, Arioso und Passacaglia (1987)**
Heinz Holliger (b. 1939)
Dedicated to Heinz Holliger’s wife and acclaimed concert harpist, Ursula Holliger
Program Notes by Jacqueline Marshall

The title of Präludium, Arioso und Passacaglia refers to Baroque forms of the same name. However, the form of Holliger’s work is only loosely referential to Baroque form.

**Indications from the composer:**

**Präludium:** It is important that the independence of rhythm and tempo in each hand comes clearly to the fore.

**Arioso:** Is to be played very freely and with expressive ‘declaration.’ The quintuplets layered over the eighth notes are to be played very evenly.

**Passacaglia:** The five main tones per bar (C-D-Eb-C-A) should be clearly brought out.

The Präludium centers on aspects of time and resonance. The continuous, connected murmurings of the Präludium give a directional sense of horizontality. These sections are contrasted with vertical, interruptive and highly pointillistic statements. The distinction between the harpist’s two hands mirrors this world of contrasts. Simultaneous differences in dynamics, rhythm, tempo, timbre, etc. are meant to give the impression of two distinct entities working separately.

The Arioso is marked “Very Slowly (very free and expressively declaimed).” After the highly textural experience of the Präludium, the melodies of this slow Arioso give the impression of a “song without words.”
The Passacaglia is a set of 25 variations on a 5-pitch passacaglia (C-D-Eb-C-A). These 5 pitches spell Ursula’s name.

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