

CELLO GRADUATE RECITAL

By
LAURA MAC-KNIGHT MAULE

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

STEVEN THOMAS, CHAIR
JANNA LOWER, MEMBER
WELSON TREMURA, MEMBER

A PERFORMANCE IN LIEU OF THESIS PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MUSIC
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
2012

Summary of Performance Option in Lieu of Thesis
Presented to the College of Fine Arts of the University of Florida
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Music

CELLO GRADUATE RECITAL

By

Laura Mac-Knight Maule

May 2012

Chair: Steven Thomas
Major: Music

The repertoire chosen for this concert aims to explore the range of sound capabilities of the cello, as well as present important composers of the traditional repertoire for the instrument. These are demanding pieces, as they require the performer to explore different techniques for their ideal interpretation. Besides the renowned composers J. S. Bach and J. Brahms, three important Latin American composers were part of this program, properly representing the musical style of their countries. The master of Argentinean tango A. Piazzolla and the versatile Brazilian composers H. Villa-Lobos and C. Guarnieri all had in common the experience of living and working temporarily in the USA and in Paris. They all met other important composers and musicians who contributed to make their music internationally recognized.

All the composers chosen for this concert dedicated a reasonable time of their lives to write music for the cello: J. S. Bach composed the first works ever written for this instrument (the six suites for unaccompanied cello were all written between 1717 and 1723, when Bach served as a Kapellmeister in Cöthen); J. Brahms composed two sonatas for cello and piano, and transcribed his Violin Sonata Op. 78 to cello, besides various chamber music works (trios,

quartets, quintets and sextets) where the cello always plays a very important character; C. Guarnieri composed three sonatas, two *cantilenas*, and *Ponteio e Dansa*, all for cello and piano; H. Villa-Lobos wrote sonatas, concertos, and several short pieces for cello and piano in various styles, besides two *Bachianas Brasileiras* for Cello Ensemble, and several chamber music works where the cello is extremely important; finally, A. Piazzolla only wrote one piece specifically for cello and piano, but his style of tango was very much based on his passion for chamber music. Through José Bragato (the cellist of his group *Nuevo Tango*) and also his friendship with A. Ginastera, whose wife was an excellent cellist, Piazzolla found his inspiration. His works were very important to debut the cello in popular music.

Finally, all these composers are somehow related to each other, and certainly J. S. Bach influenced all the others in some level. J. Brahms studied deeply the works of earlier composers (including Bach as one of his favorites) and made it clear in his compositions. Both H. Villa-Lobos and A. Piazzolla were admirers of Bach (Villa-Lobos wrote nine *Bachianas Brasileiras* among other works to show his admiration), and C. Guarnieri was considered by some musicologists as *the Brazilian Brahms*, due to some compositional characteristics that show a certain similarity with the way Brahms applied the harmonic aspect of his compositions.

Program for April 8, 2012, at 7:30 pm – MUB 101

J. S. Bach (1685-1750) – Suite for unaccompanied cello in C minor BWV 1011

- Prelude
- Sarabande
- Gavotte I and II
- Gigue

J. Brahms (1833-1897) – Cello Sonata Op. 99 in F major (1886)

- Allegro vivace
- Adagio affettuoso
- Allegro passionato
- Allegro molto

Benny Plasencia, piano

-: INTERMISSION :-

C. Guarnieri (1907-1993) – Ponteio e Dansa (1946)

Benny Plasencia, piano

H. Villa-Lobos (1887-1959) – Assobio a Jato (The Jet Whistle) for flute and cello (1950)

- Allegro non troppo
- Adagio
- Vivo

Hsiao-wei Chen, flute

A. Piazzolla (1921-1992) – Le Grand Tango (1982)

Brian Hargrove, Piano

Program notes:

Johann Sebastian Bach wrote the suite for unaccompanied cello in C minor originally to be played *scordatura* – in this particular case, the A string is tuned a whole step down to G – which provides a unique sonority and projection to the instrument. This is his only cello suite starting with a prelude and fugue. Its Sarabande and Gigue are more introspective than all the previous ones, and it is the only case of two Gavottes both written in a minor key. Although this suite is written in the key of C minor, Bach ingeniously wrote certain passages that can give us the sense of E-flat major.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) composed his *Cello Sonata Op. 99 in F major* in 1885. By that time, he seemed to have grown more comfortable composing for the cello and the result was a more balanced sonority between the two instruments than in his *Sonata Op. 38 in E minor*. The middle register used predominantly for the cello in that work presents particular challenges in sound projection which are no longer present in the sonata op. 99, resulting in more lyricism, exuberance and intensity in the latter work.

As a committed advocate of the Brazilian style and dissatisfied with the German dodecaphonic invasion of Brazil in the 1940s, **Camargo Guarnieri** wrote, among other works, *Ponteio e Dansa*, which displays the rhythmic and harmonic essence of more heterogeneous Brazilian music, with its European and African influences.

Heitor Villa-Lobos composed *Assobio a Jato (The Jet Whistle)* in New York in 1950. The flute and cello are equally important throughout all three movements, playing in counterpoint and exchanging melody and accompaniment. This work was named for a unique sound required from the flutist in the third movement, playing very fast scale

passages, eventually blowing directly into the mouthpiece, and culminating in an imitation of whistling ascending sounds, like a whistle powered by steam, such as that used in old trains.

Le Grand Tango, which **Astor Piazzolla** wrote in 1982 specifically for cello and piano, is one of his few pieces of mainstream classical music; however in it he never lost the varying moods and vitality of the tango such as energetic passages contrasting with nostalgic moments, the very essence of his style. This is a challenging piece, and it has become a great favorite of cellists. Le Grand Tango was dedicated to Russian cellist M. Rostropovich and premiered in New Orleans in 1990.

Biographical sketch

Laura Mac-Knight Maule

Currently enrolled to the Masters program at UF and studying the cello with Dr. S. Thomas, Laura Mac-Knight Maule received her Bachelor's degree in Cello Performance at the University of São Paulo (Brazil) with Dr. R. Suetholz, and Cello Pedagogy/Performance at Indiana University with Ms. H. Winold and Mr. E. Colon.

As a versatile artist, Laura has performed and recorded with some important Brazilian and international popular musicians in their Brazilian tours. In 2009, she performed at the Ceremony of 50th Anniversary of Sukyo Mahikari in Takayama, Japan, as the principal cello of the orchestra representing the North America region.

She received the 2nd prize of the National Chamber Music Contest "Cidade de Araçatuba" in 2002 and 2003, and the 1st prize of the "Nascente de Talentos" Competition – USP/Abril Publishing, 2003. She also has two concertos and one sonata dedicated for her.

In 2007-08 Laura was a guest professor of Cello and Chamber Music at Universidade Federal de Uberlândia – MG, Brazil.

As a soloist, she performed concertos with some orchestras in Brazil and USA.