

# CHIANG YUNG-YUAN SENIOR RECITAL

6 April 2020, Monday, 1pm

## **Béla Kovács**

*Hommage à J. S. Bach*

## **Carl Nielsen**

Clarinet Concerto, Op. 57

BEATRICE LIN, piano

LU PEI-HSIEN (B.Mus4), percussion

## **Johannes Brahms**

Clarinet Trio in A minor, Op.114

- I. Allegro
- II. Adagio
- III. Andantino grazioso
- IV. Allegro

YANG SHUN-MING (B.Mus2), *cello*

YANG TING-TING (B.Mus4), *piano*

## Programme Notes

### **Béla Kovács**

#### *Hommage à J. S. Bach*

Béla Kovács (1937-) is a Hungarian clarinetist and professor who currently teaches at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest, Hungary. In alignment with his artistic approach towards pedagogy, he published a book titled *Hommages for clarinet solo*. This is a set of concert etudes that he wrote for his students so that they can be exposed to various styles of music writing. This is a fresh alternative to the commonly played mechanical etudes.

*Hommage à J. S. Bach* is one of the concert etudes in this collection. As the title suggests, this etude is based on Bach's music. It opens with an *Adagio* introduction, with its theme being further developed in the *Allegro* section that follows after. Kovács wraps up the etude in a humorous way by writing in a drastically different style from Bach's; He inserts his own sense of music-writing by ending it in a 'Kovács style'.

J.S. Bach is well-known for his solo sonatas and partitas for various string instruments. Hence in this etude, I attempt to imitate how a string instrument player would present this- by bringing out the fluid melodic contours and achieving the crisp articulation needed. Bach also wrote numerous works for the keyboard, and his expertise in such is reflected in his works for monophonic instruments as well. Therefore, I hope to bring out the chordal and modal inflections as much as possible in this harmonically interesting work.

### **Carl Nielsen**

#### *Clarinet Concerto, Op. 57*

Carl Nielsen (1865-1931) was known to be the most outstanding composer from Denmark. He was struck by inspiration to write for wind instruments in 1921, after listening to the Copenhagen Wind Quintet rehearse Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante K. 297b. He was attracted by the beauty of such tonal music and decided to write a work for this group. His Wind Quintet Op.43 was born in the following year consequently. He had an aspiration to go a step further to compose a concerto for each instrument in the group. However, he only managed to complete two of them- for the flute and for the clarinet. The *Clarinet Concerto Op.57* is for the group's clarinetist, Aage Oxenvad, which was completed in the summer of 1928 and debuted in a private concert in October that year. Since then, Nielsen's Clarinet Concerto has become a popular work to add to any clarinetist's repertoire list. It is commonly appointed as the set piece for well-known international competitions and required for entrance auditions to conservatories.

Unlike other concertos, Nielsen's Clarinet Concerto is one continuous long work, instead of being traditionally separated into movements. However, it is possible to identify 4 distinct sections: *Allegretto un poco*, *Poco Adagio*, *Allegro non troppo*, *Allegro vivace*. Each has its own distinct tempo and character, which can correspond with the typical 4-movement structure. The concerto opens with a rather simple but melodious line. Throughout the entire concerto, various moods and characters are being introduced, but they are only temporary. There are sudden blasts or surges in energy, and likewise, unexpected moments of stillness and calmness. Sporadic, random notes are often inserted throughout the piece to depict the unsteady texture. It is also interesting to note how besides the solo clarinet, the snare drum in the orchestra also plays an important role in causing conflict in a lot of these stormy passages.

There are two explanations as to why there is so much chaos in this concerto. The first explanation is that Nielsen wrote this in his most difficult period of his life- he was stressed over his music being unapproachable to the wider pool of audience. The other explanation is that the clarinetist he wrote for had Bipolar disorder and he wanted this concerto to be a reflection of his hardship. After listening to this concerto, we can only imagine how difficult their struggles were at that time.

## **Johannes Brahms**

### *Clarinet Trio in A minor, Op. 114*

- I. Allegro
- II. Adagio
- III. Andantino grazioso
- IV. Allegro

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) was a German composer, pianist and conductor. After Brahms had completed his String Quintet Op.111 in 1890, it felt like it was about time for him to retire; He felt that he was running out of creative inspiration for new compositions. However, he reached a turning point in his musical life in March 1891 when he visited Meiningen and met the principal clarinetist of the Meiningen court orchestra, Richard Mühlfeld. He was greatly inspired by his playing and churned out 4 chamber works involving the clarinet. This included his Clarinet Trio Op.114 and Clarinet Quintet Op.115 which were completed in the summer of 1891, and the Clarinet (or Viola) Sonatas Op.120 No. 1 and 2 three years later.

The first movement of the Clarinet Trio opens with the solo cello playing its arpeggiac theme. This is followed by the clarinet, which explores its sonorous range till it reaches the very lowest note of the A clarinet. This movement contains various textures and characters that intertwine seamlessly. The music in Brahms' music flows in such a balanced and logical manner that one can easily be in trance and lose sense of the bar

lines. The clarinet opens the second movement with the same note as the closure of the first movement. This brings about much imagination and reminisce from the previous movement, with this movement exploding with a plethora of beautiful dialogue amongst the three instruments. The third movement is a waltz that follows a simple melodic line, but one that embodies a charming dance lilt. This is followed by the most agitated movement of the four. The last movement is full of Hungarian character and colour. It possesses frequent rhythmic changes, demonstrating Brahms' mature approach towards composition in his final years.

I decided to end my recital with a chamber work as it represents not only the clarinet and music skills that I have picked up, but also the long-lasting friendships that I have gained over the past 4 years of my undergraduate studies.

Programme Notes by *Chiang Yung-Yuan*