Undergraduate Student Recital

Olivia Nava, Bass Trombone

Dr. Natasha Kislenko, Piano

A Moon Looking Over an Endless Sea

Friday, May 29, 2020 | 4 pm | UC Santa Barbara

program

Suite for Unaccompanied Bass Trombone
- Ballade
- The Jubilant Gallop

Three Advanced Studies for Unaccompanied Trombone
- Poco adagio
- Allegro

Sonata in F Major, Op. 1, No. 12 for Bass Trombone and Piano*
- Adagio
- Allegro
- Largo
- Allegro

Dr. Natasha Kislenko,** piano

*Originally for Violin and Continuo

**UC Santa Barbara faculty member

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Olivia Nava is a student of UC Santa Barbara faculty member William Booth
PROGRAM NOTES

E.C. Culver
This suite of four pieces is structured along the same forms as found in the J.S. Bach Unaccompanied Cello Suites. The melodies are directly related to the harmonies and, as in the Bach suites, unmistakably outline the harmonic direction of each movement. Culver’s style of writing has been called “Contemporary Baroque” and has been endorsed by some of the leading musicians in the country.

One particular characteristic of the Suite is the many interval leaps in the melody. This was the only direction suggested by Robert F. Sanders, who commissioned this work. He asked that Culver “include lots of interesting, fun, and nearly impossible intervals jumps” to make the work more challenging. As a result, the four pieces within this Suite should provide the performer with ample room to cover the complete range of their instrument.

Eric C. Culver was a trombonist and composer who graduated from Julliard with Bachelor of Music and Master’s degrees in performance in 1966. Since then, he performed with many of the leading jazz orchestras of the 20th century, including the Glenn Miller Orchestra and the Buddy Rich band, among many others. At the time of publication, he lived in Los Angeles. Working as a free-lance studio musician and composer, Culver developed his “Contemporary Baroque” musical idiom. In addition, he has written proof (that some will claim he wrote himself) that he is a “real nice guy.”

C.P.E. Bach
Originally for solo flute in A minor, the Three Advanced Studies of Carl Philippe Emmanuel Bach were transcribed and arranged in C minor by Allen Ostrander. In his only unaccompanied flute sonata, C.P.E. Bach, much like his father, Johann Sebastian, writes for solo instruments by outlining harmonies in a very clear way. At many times, he merely arpeggiates chords that have functional harmony. The biggest difference from his father was the reason for, and style of writing. His music was a part of the musical transition from the baroque to an early classical style. During this time period, C.P.E. Bach advocated that musical expression should take precedence over voice complexity. This style, empfindsamer stil or sensitive style, was one which emphasized drama and musical expression with quick and often extreme dynamic changes. This is seen in the opening theme of the Poco adagio, where there are two voices, the lower pedal tone, and the simple and sweet melody floating above it. Their dynamics are contrasted, as are their articulation styles. This kind of writing is contrasted to preceding music, and some styles of the time, wherein a movement of a piece has the same feeling throughout, like we see in the Handel Sonata.

Allen Ostrander was one of the most influential bass trombonists of the 20th century. Originally a tenor trombonist, he began his bass trombone career in 1935 with the National Symphony Orchestra (Washington, DC). Over the next several years, he played with several major orchestras, including the Pittsburgh and NBC Orchestras. Shortly afterward, he began his tenure at the New York Philharmonic, which lasted for 29 years. During his time in that orchestra, he wrote some of the first bass trombone method books, as well as many solos and etude books. It was this work, and his playing that helped establish the bass trombone as a solo instrument, and essential in the modern orchestra.

G.F. Handel
Handel’s Sonata in F Major, Op. 1, No. 12 is one of fifteen sonatas for solo instruments that were published in 1724 and are known today collectively as his Opus 1. This piece is designated sometimes as Sonata No. 12, being the twelfth of the fifteen as published in the volume XXVII of the Handel-Gesellschaft edition. At other times, it is known as Sonata No. 3, being the third of the six sonatas in the collection that are for violin.

Even though his contemporary was J. S. Bach, their styles were very different. As a master of counterpoint, Bach preferred to write fugues and canons that would be, while harmonically simple, interesting to listen to because of their many moving lines. This genre of music was called the learned style. Handel, on the other hand, wrote instrumental music to give soloists opportunities to shine with their musical and
technical skill. His music was a part of the galant style, and it features one important line with little moving backgrounds and simple harmonies. This is most obvious in the first and third movement. Indeed, Handel’s writing was the beginning of what C.P.E. Bach carried into the classical era, a style more concerned with musical and lyrical interest than voice complexity. This kind of music is opposite to C.P.E.’s in that it allows for nearly only one type of musical emotion through each movement, called Affektenlehre or the doctrine of affects. This is most obvious in the third movement, which is exclusively in D minor and very connected throughout. While their pieces on this program are very different, you can see elements of Handel’s writing style in C.P.E. Bach’s. This is indicated in the first theme of the Poco adagio, for example.

Douglas Yeo, arranger of this work, is one of the most influential modern bass trombonists. He has played with many orchestras over his tenure as a bass trombonist. Of them, the longest term was the Boston Symphony Orchestra. During this time, he developed his website and included essential resources for the modern bass trombonist. These incorporate a list of essential solos (where I learned about the Culver), etudes, and a book of “The 100 Essential Orchestral Excerpts for The Modern Bass Trombonist”. Since his retirement he has taught, performed at many freelance gigs, and given master classes as one of the premier bass trombonists of the 20th and 21st centuries.