



The Festival for Creative Pianists

Arthur Houle, Founder & Director

www.pianofestival.org

Judges & Director Program

Mesa State College

Moss Performing Arts Center Recital Hall

Grand Junction, CO

Friday, March 26, 2010

7:30 P.M.

Suggested donation, at the door:

\$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors & \$5 for students

Part 1: John Salmon, pianist (See Salmon article, pp. 3 & 4)

Arabesque in C Major, Op. 18 (1838-39)

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Ballade in G Minor, Op. 23 (1835-36)

Fryderyk Chopin (1810-1849)

Interactive improvisations on themes by Schumann and Chopin

Part 2: Arthur Houle, pianist, with Emily Kampf, dancer (Notes on p. 2)

Original compositions:

Interlude (1976, revised 2009)

Waltz for Ravel (2009, based on 1976 theme)

Choreography by Ann J. Sanders, Mesa State College Professor Emeritus of Dance

5-minute Intermission

Part 3: Arthur Johnson

With assistance by Drea E. Wagner, NCTM (former student of Dr. Johnson)

Interactive improvisations on images

Sonata No. 17 in D minor, Op. 31, No. 2 (1801-02)
III. Allegretto

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Notes by Houle:

Interlude is a four-voiced prelude written when I was an undergraduate student. It is in the key of B-Flat Mixolydian and very short (only 12 measures long). It is a bit reminiscent of Maurice Ravel (1875-1937), thereby serving well as a bridge to the *Waltz for Ravel* that follows. *Interlude* was the product of an assignment to write a modal piece for theory class. The class was sternly admonished by our teacher to avoid using the I_7 chord at the start of any piece in Mixolydian mode. Doing so, our instructor cautioned severely, would inevitably result in that chord functioning as a V_7 , thereby negating the Mixolydian key. Ever the rebel, I took this as a challenge. I defiantly began with a Bb_7 chord and - just for good measure (pun intended) - cadenced on an inverted I_7 chord, followed by another cadence closing on the I_9 chord in root position. I ended the whole vignette, however, on a more respectable Bb triad (without a 7th or 9th). The piece never modulates to E-flat Major. Nevertheless, my teacher, considerably vexed, instructed me to write another piece to fulfill the assignment. If memory serves, the resulting piece was the original much shorter version of *Waltz for Ravel*.

When I play *Interlude*, I envision an aspiring dancer whose paralyzing shyness has turned dreams of stardom into a fading flicker on the horizon. Today, however, the dance hall is empty and no one is watching. An unexpected, tantalizing opportunity awaits! Seizing the moment, our newly emboldened dancer bursts into an exuberant dance of extemporaneous twists, turns and fluctuating tempos. Now that shyness is no longer an obstacle, our intrepid dancer is utterly enchanted by ethereal imaginary music and, at long last, swept up in the innocent unfettered yearnings and joys of uninhibited movement. This joyous dance is depicted in *Waltz for Ravel*, which immediately follows *Interlude*.

Waltz for Ravel is an homage to Ravel. It has a kinship with his 1913 *Prelude*. Both are in the key of A Dorian and have evocative harmonies with a jazzy flavor. My waltz was originally 27 measures long, which is exactly the same length as Ravel's piece (not intentional, however - merely a remarkable coincidence). These 27 measures now comprise the opening "A" section of the waltz's considerably broadened 9-minute ABA'CA" form (the middle "A" being abbreviated), composed in June of 2009.

"URTEXT, QUE ME VEUX-TU?"

John Salmon
University of North Carolina - Greensboro

Scholars of sonata form will pardon my paraphrase of Fontenelle's eighteenth-century query, "Sonata, what do you want of me?," reformulated here for present-day performers as "Urtext, what do you want of me?"

We live in an age that values the Urtext, and that is a good thing. While I cannot speak for other instrumentalists (oboists, trumpeters, guitarists, and all those that make up the study of performance at the college level), I know that pianists are very concerned with the editions from which they learn or teach masterworks. Gone are the days when piano teachers assign a Beethoven sonata without discussion of the recommended edition(s).

Never mind, for a moment, that the precise function and format of an Urtext edition differ from publisher to publisher. Some editions include extensive annotation and information on sources; others offer virtually no added commentary -- let alone that two Urtext editions of the same piece are likely to differ, sometimes substantially. Reading of texts to determine a composer's intentions, to make interpretative decisions, and to express what is written and connoted, isn't for the faint of heart or for those who fear exploring murky areas.

Yet I perceive, at least among piano teachers, a certain overvaluing of the Urtext, as if "textual fidelity" were an absolute, and tampering with the text were a sacrilege. In my view, the Urtext is nothing more than a fertile bed from which all kinds of textual manipulations and free fantasy can sprout. Imagination and the id must be at the heart of any truly compelling performance (bolstered, to be sure, by left-brained activity, such as comparing texts and studying style). This includes the possibility of changing notes, if the situation warrants, or actually improvising.

Long before the National Association of Schools of Music decided that our music students needed to have some exposure to the practice of improvising music, most musicians of every culture have improvised. In the Western canon, it is worth recalling that many great composers were also great improvisers, including J. S. Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, and Liszt.

Every now and then, a student shows me a critique from some well-meaning judge who noted in the student's performance an omission of a "standard ornament" in a Bach invention. Alas, we live in an age of literalism! Far more perverse, in my estimation, is to perform Bach's inventions (and suites and toccatas) always with the same ornamentation. Assuming Bach had time to perform his works more than once, it is conceivable that he would have changed them at every performance. Evidence thereof exists in the 1723 variant of his C Major Invention, where Bach replaced triplets with sixteenth notes (see Alfred Publishing Co. Edition of the complete Two-Part Inventions).

Salmon continued...

Or what about Mozart, who sometimes barely had time to write down the notes before a first performance -- particularly of the piano concertos, expecting to fill in at the moment certain Eingang (lead-in) and Durchgang (passing tone) passages, not to mention complete cadenzas?

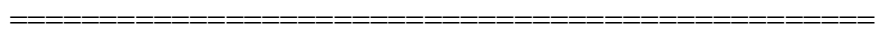
Even Beethoven, who made his mark in Vienna first as an improviser, was a notable "adder of notes" to his own compositions, as Czerny relates in his "Anecdotes and Notes About Beethoven." This makes Czerny's later admonition highly ironic that "the player must by no means allow himself to alter the composition, nor to make any addition or abbreviation." Perhaps Czerny was still smarting from that 1816 letter he received from Beethoven, chiding the young Czerny for having changed Beethoven's written score. Surely Beethoven wasn't pooh-poohing the whole idea of tampering with the text, only Czerny's unimaginative brutish efforts.

And Chopin's notorious habit of allowing varying versions of his works to be published probably reflects his own improvisational disposition. He was forever changing his mind about fioritura ("flowering") flourishes. I see no reason not to experiment with my own versions of, say, the various repeated episodes of Chopin's B Major Nocturne, Op. 9, No. 3. If Chopin experimented with his own works, why shouldn't I?

"Ah, but that would require erudition, taste, and a knowledge of keyboard harmony," you may retort collectively. Hmm. Fancy that! Imagine seeing that dominant chord in third inversion in bar 34 of Bach's E Major Sinfonia and knowing that you can add, among many other possibilities, a descending and ascending scale in the soprano voice, a little lead-in, connecting to bar 35. What a triumph of stylistic and theoretical awareness: a celebration of imagination!

There are several philosophical subtexts to these suggestions -- for one, that the "work of art," at least in the realm of musical composition, is not the score but the performed piece, perhaps differing at times from the printed page. Notice too that this argument gives hierarchical primacy to the performer over the composer, or at least equal partnership, in making the music come to life. In this regard, I imagine that the relationship of composer to performer is much more akin to the relationship of playwright to director-actor. Every actor who has ever performed a role knows that absolute "textual fidelity" is a myth, that phrases and words can be changed to make a more powerful presentation. To the question "How has Tennessee Williams survived all those permutations of his original script?" must be answered "Only with those vital actors and their 'permutations' who take risks and bring the play to life with spontaneity and conviction!"

A work of art isn't some immutable Platonic ideal. The music isn't on the page. It is in the air, filtered through the performer's imagination. Don't tell me not to enter the compositional world of Scarlatti, Ravel, and even present-day composer Lowell Liebermann -- all of whom wrote music of improvisational character. I once asked composer Kenneth Frazelle if he minded if I (or other pianists) were to change his score. He replied, "If it makes the piece better" -- a challenging answer, to be sure. But why shouldn't performers know as much about the pieces they play as the composers who wrote them? That immersion, including the freedom to change notes, redefines our relation to the Urtext, even as it injects the interpreter's art with a new vitality.



Biographies of the performers/judges/choreographer:

John Salmon holds B.M. and B.A. (philosophy) degrees from Texas Christian University, the "Solistendiplom" from the Freiburg Hochschule für Musik, an M.M. from the Juilliard School, and a D.M.A. from the University of Texas-Austin. His awards include a fellowship from The Beethoven Foundation (now the American Pianists Association), the Premio Jaén, the Loren Eiseley Memorial Award from the University of Maryland Piano Competition, and the Gina Bachauer Memorial Award from Juilliard. Salmon performs internationally and has recorded for Radio Suisse Romande, RAI Italian Radio, Spanish National Radio, Canadian Broadcasting Corp., WFMT Radio in Chicago, C-Span and PBS television. Salmon is also active as a jazz pianist and has released CD's of the music of the legendary Dave Brubeck. Dr. Salmon is founder and former director of the annual "Focus on Piano Literature" symposium at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro, where he is Professor of Piano.

Arthur Houle holds degrees from the University of Massachusetts-Lowell, New England Conservatory and the University of Iowa. A piano teacher since the age of thirteen, Dr. Houle has taught at major institutions in the United States. His *Cowboy Jazz*, a collection of fun student compositions, was recently published by the Hal Leonard Corporation. He is Associate Professor of Music and Director of Keyboard Studies at Mesa State College.

Emily Kampf is a professional dancer who performed with the Kim Robards Dance Company in the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing. Kampf is attending Mesa State College and has also served as part of the faculty in Mesa State College's dance program.

Ann J. Sanders, Professor Emeritus of Dance at Mesa State College, has a professional background that includes Chicago Opera Ballet and Equity summer theaters in the east. She is a veteran choreographer, equally at home in modern, ballet, music theatre and avant-garde genres.

Arthur Johnson holds a D.M.A. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and an M.M. from Brigham Young University. He is Associate Professor of Music at Lakeland College in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, where he heads the piano performance and pedagogy major, teaching applied piano, piano pedagogy and literature, and accompanying; he also teaches and oversees the instruction of class piano and music theory. He is an international soloist and collaborative pianist whose students have won numerous awards. Since studying jazz piano with Joan Wildman and classical improvisation with Mária Apagyí, Dr. Johnson has specialized in classical-based improvisation pedagogy. Incorporating classical improvisation into all his teaching subjects, he has given presentations and workshops on this topic at major professional conferences. He has also lectured on teaching techniques, the learning process, and the life and music of Hungarian composer András Viski, whose music he has recorded on the CD *Elismerés*.

Drea Wagner is a 2009 graduate of Lakeland College with a degree in Piano Performance and Pedagogy. She is an accomplished studio teacher, performer, arranger, composer, improviser, and church musician. While in high school she began studying with Dr. Arthur Johnson, and has since won many competitions and awards, including the WMTA Badger State Keyboard Competition, and the Lakeland College 2009 Outstanding Student in Piano Performance and Pedagogy award.

An accomplished pianist, **Monte Atkinson** holds a Bachelors degree in choral music, piano and strings from Utah State University. His Masters in Choral Conducting and D.M.A. in Choral Music were earned at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He has been Director of Choral Activities at Mesa State College since 1985. He oversees choral music education, teaches piano, and conducts the Mesa State Concert Choir, Chamber Choir and the Western Colorado Chorale. Choirs under his direction have performed with the Denver Chamber Orchestra, Mexico National Symphony, Vancouver Symphony, annually with the Grand Junction Symphony Orchestra, and the Mesa State Symphony Orchestra. He has appeared twice as guest conductor at Carnegie Hall and has also conducted international performances with the Mesa State Chamber Choir. He plays double bass with the Grand Junction Symphony Orchestra and was the 1999 recipient of the Distinguished Faculty Award.

This festival is part of a growing movement whose battle-cry is, in John Salmon's words, "to loosen the strictures of perfectionism and literalism that have gradually eviscerated the interpreter's art in this age of 'note-perfect' recordings and competitions, and to reemphasize the beautiful, the imaginative."

We are grateful for the contributions by the following individuals, without whom this festival would not be possible:

**Evelyn Billberg
Karen Combs
Brita Fay
Azam and Arthur Houle**

**Bijan and Jenny Houle
Frank & Jayne Steuart
Susan Torgrude, M.S.
(Environmental Researcher/Planner, BOELTER
DESIGN GROUP, Inc.)**

**We need and appreciate your generous support!
Donations have tax benefits, and are payable to Mesa State College Music Department.**

IMPORTANT: Please indicate "piano festival" in the memo portion of checks.

**Mailing address for donations:
Dr. Calvin Hofer -- Chair, Department of Music
Mesa State College
1100 North Avenue
Grand Junction, CO 81501
Telephone: 970.248.1163**

Thanks also to **Mesa State College, Sera Schools Music Program, the Grand Junction Music Teachers Association, & J. B. Hart Music** for their sponsorship.



J.B. HART MUSIC
YAMAHA PIANOS & CLAVINOVAS
FENDER & MARTIN GUITARS
AMP's • DRUMS • PA's
KORG KEYBOARDS
417 Main St., Grand Junction, CO 81501
(970) 242-9282
1-800-310-9282
www.jbhartmusic.com



Thanks also to our volunteers:

Evelyn Billberg
Britni Bryan

Stephanie Haren
Drea Wagner

We also appreciate the day-to-day support and tireless contributions of our music department chair, **Calvin Hofer**, and our *very fine* ☺ fine arts administrative assistant, **Lyn Ross**.

Finally, a hearty "thank you" goes to **Frank & Jayne Steuart** for their hospitality in hosting several people at their beautiful home.

👉 *Festival participants: Please don't forget to sign in 👈 before and after this program!*

Upcoming:

• Winners' Recital 🙌 & Awards Ceremony

Tomorrow evening, Sat., March 27, 7:30 P.M., MPAC Recital Hall (\$10/\$8/\$5).

Festival participants please note: Tomorrow at approx. 🕒 4:00 – 4:30 P.M., the names of the festival First Prize winners will be posted on the MPAC hallway bulletin board. Students should consult this in order to know if they are performing at the Winners Recital. Students generally play one piece (chosen by judges) per prize won. Memory is not required. Honorable Mention Prizes will be announced at the Awards Ceremony (not in advance).

• Wednesday Music Club Student Winners Recital

Wed., April 27, 1:00 P.M., MPAC Recital Hall (Free admission).

• The next **Festival for Creative Pianists** will be held on April 8-9, 2011.

Wolf gang's unsuccessful brother
Wolf bang



By Darius Houle
age 10