

Dominique Kim

M.M. I Recital

Michel Blavet - Sonata in D Major, Op. 2 “La Chauvet”

French composer and flute virtuoso Michel Blavet enjoyed a prolific career as the principal flute of Louis XV's personal musical ensemble, as well as the Paris Opera Orchestra, among other posts. He was known for his impeccable intonation and sound, and was praised by the likes of Joachim Quantz, and even Voltaire, for his musical sensibilities. The six flute sonatas with bass were originally an endeavor supported by Louis XV, but were later completed during his time as steward of music for Louis, Count of Clermont. These sonatas are a notable example of the late Baroque style, with the union of French, Italian, and galant styles. “La Chauvet” is thought to be in reference to an organist by the name of Chauvet, who must have been an acquaintance of Blavet's.

One of only two sonatas in this collection in a major key, “La Chauvet” begins with an broad and inviting processional-style Largo. The following Allegro sounds like a light and spirited peasant dance with its simple repeated 8th-note motif. *Le Marc-Antoine* refers to the characterization of a vigorous young man, whose image is brought to life in the robust gigue-like aria. The second aria is unique in its French instruction, *tendrement* (tenderly), and features sinuous melodies that beg to be ornamented over sensuous dissonances in the accompaniment. The lively *Fuga* provides a lively challenge for both the flute and the basso continuo, as well as rhythmic interest in the several hemiola bars scattered throughout the movement. The title *La Dédale*, most likely refers to the Greek figure Daedalus, who is best known for creating the Labyrinth, where the Minotaur creature dwelt. A maze-like quality can be heard in the occasional and brief minor moments, as well as in the serpentine falling third motifs.

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*The following pieces are united in their explicit use and influence of folk songs and traditions, revealing all three composers' tendencies to inscribe their music with the national traditions of the past. This was perhaps to ensure the cultural preservation of treasured traditions after an era of utter destruction (the world wars), or to establish their national identity in artistic form during a time of great tension between political giants at the time.*

#### **Fikret Amirov - 6 Pieces for Flute and Piano**

A native of Azerbaijan, Amirov grew up around Azerbaijani folk music, as his father was a famous mugam (folk musical composition) singer. He performed a lot with his sister and started composing at a young age. At the ripe age of 19, he was drafted into the war when the Nazis invaded the USSR, but was able to continue his conservatory studies after being wounded and demobilized from military service. He is best known for creating a new genre called the symphonic mugam, in which he infused Azeri folk melodies with the monumentality and timbral diversity of the symphony orchestra. He often did extensive research on folk music and traditions, and the influence of folk music is clear in the rhythm, harmony, and colors of his works.

The first movement, titled *Song of the Ashuge* refers to the 500 year-old narrative and musical tradition that originated in the mountains of Azerbaijan. The art form consists of a minstrel, or ashuge, who conveys an epic tale using both spoken poetry and improvisatory musical accompaniment, using an Azerbaijan lute. Storytelling roots are clear in the declamatory theme and sudden shifts in dynamic. Following the ashuge is a lilting lullaby that comprises mostly of an ornamented falling third motif. In this movement, and several others, this trill-like

motif is meant to imitate the sound and mode of a mugam singer. In the spirited dance movement, he plays with rhythmic emphasis, oscillating between compound and duple meter, and displacing accents to weaker beats. With its gestural motifs and improvisational qualities, “In the Azerbaijani Mountains” is perhaps a continuation of the “Song of the Ashug”. The fifth movement conjures the splashing of water with quick and flippant ornaments in the flute, and light grace notes in the piano. The movement ends with a quasi-cadenza, again recalling the tradition of the ashug. The sun sets with the Nocturne, in which a simple melody is repeated several times with various ornamentations. It ends with a dramatic upward scale cadenza, the deep and full inhale to the exhale that manifests in the long and held last note.

### **Isang Yun - Etude No. 5**

The life of native Korean composer Isang Yun was marked by great political turmoil, which is evident in his musical style. After abandoning business college, Yun studied music theory, composition, and the history of Western music at Seoul National University. He then went on to attend and teach at the Osaka Conservatory in Japan, and later traveled to Tokyo to further his composition studies. At the outbreak of World War II, Yun returned to Japanese-occupied Korea and participated in the Korean independence movement. In 1943 he was imprisoned for two months for participating in secret anti-Japanese political activity. A staunch advocate for the reunification of North and South Korea after the war, Yun visited North Korea in 1963, after his family settled in West Berlin, to promote a performance with musicians from both Koreas. This event likely contributed to his and his wife’s abduction from Berlin by the South Korean secret police, who charged him with anti-government activities and collaboration with North Korea. He was imprisoned and exiled from South Korea, and during his imprisonment he was tortured, attempted suicide, and coerced into confessing espionage. This triggered an international outcry and a petition led by Igor Stravinsky and Herbert von Karajan, signed by almost 200 artists from around the world. They stated that he was an important cultural ambassador for the country of Korea, and without him the world would not know very much about Korean music. He was eventually released early in 1969, at which point he returned to West Berlin and continued to compose.

This etude is the last of a collection of etudes written for flute, alto flute, piccolo, and bass flute. Yun developed a compositional technique called *Hauptton* (main tone), which he employs in all of the etudes. Whereas Western music relies on chordal structure and harmonic progressions, Eastern music explores the individual tone, imbuing a singular note with the capacity to tell a story. To me, the focus on the life of a single note is akin to Eastern calligraphy and drawing, where meaning is created by changes in texture, shading, and direction, rather than color and figure. In fact, the emphasis on the singular note draws from traditional Korean performance practices like Sanjo and Pansori, which were forms of musical story-telling. In these traditions, the concept of *Han* is key to understanding the emotional depth of the music. *Han* is a form of grief or resentment that is steeped in most Korean art forms, and describes the passion and sorrow of Korean people. Yun’s *Hauptton* melodies are a modern exploration of these traditions, where each main tone is embellished with glissandi, trills, timbral and pitch inflections, double-tremolo, and even the combination of singing while playing. His recalling of traditional Korean styles harkens back to pre-modern era Korea, and is perhaps his way of imagining and reifying a previously undivided Korea, one unmarked by the modern traumas of world wars.

### **Otar Taktakishvili - Sonata for Flute and Piano**

Taktakishvili was born into a musical family in Tsibili, Georgia, and is considered the foremost composer of Georgian classical music in the 20th century. While still a student at the Tsibili Conservatory, Taktakishvili composed the anthem of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic. He then went on to become a professor of the conservatory, the director of the Georgian State Chorus, and the recipient of many awards, including the Stalin Prize, the Lenin Prize, and the USSR State Prize.

Short of being a communist lackey, Taktakishvili had a proclivity for expressing Georgian nationalist sentiments, particularly in his vocal works. He was greatly inspired by Georgian folk music, and often used the works of nationalist Georgian poets for his vocal compositions, which can be read as brave and subversive. Georgian poets and artists were concerned with the fight for independence and preserving the cultural identity of their country, as Georgia had a long history of being invaded and used as a territorial pawn by more powerful countries. As such, his choice of starkly nationalist poetry is often interpreted as a subtle snarl to the Soviet authorities, who showered him with accolades. Although his oeuvre consists largely of vocal music, the flute sonata is his most well-known piece in the West, probably due to its relative harmonic simplicity.

The first movement begins with a strong but harmonically ambiguous proclamation in the piano, which eventually makes way for the flute's sweet and buoyant melody. Rather than following the traditional sonata form, this movement presents itself more as a melange of folk tunes, one after the other, eventually returning to the beginning material and concluding with a sparsely written coda-like ending. The second movement is more vocal than instrumental in nature, earning the title of "aria". After a series of long and soulful phrases, the movement ends with an introspective fragmentation of one of the first melodies. In the dance-like third movement, Taktakishvili provides rhythmic interest by simultaneously using compound and simple meter. The most folk-influenced section of the piece is the 2/4 section and recalls , which ends in a heavier and much more extroverted iteration of the tune, before returning to the opening theme and meter, closing with a rapid presto coda.

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