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The Music of Elisenda Fabregas

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Music Department
Illinois State University

Guest Artist Series

The Music of
Elisenda Fábregas

featuring

Elisenda Fábregas, *Piano*
Michelle Vought, *Soprano*
Kimberly Risinger, *Flute*
Karen Collier, *Violin*

Kemp Recital Hall
Monday Evening
September 11, 2000
8:00 p.m.

The second program of the 2000-2001 Season.



Elisenda Fábregas is a composer, pianist, and teacher. Born in Terrassa, Barcelona, Spain, she has been living in the U. S. since 1978, when a postdoctoral Fulbright grant brought her to The Julliard School of Music. She subsequently earned another doctorate in music at Columbia University.

Fábregas began composing at the Julliard School in 1985, working with several dance companies and choreographers in New York City, including Jerome Robbins, Hector Zaraspe, Janet Soares and Anna Sokolow. Her works have been commissioned and performed by the Orchestra of Santa Fe, the Columbia Symphony Orchestra, and by numerous chamber groups and soloists. Fábregas' music has been heard throughout the U. S., Mexico, Canada, Spain, The Czech Republic, Taiwan, Japan and China. *Mirage*, for solo piano, (the Andrew Gurwitz Memorial Commission for the 1997 San Antonio International Piano Competition) was premiered by Rogert Wright, Silver Medallist and winner of the Best Performance Award of the Commission work. Mr. Wright has recently recorded *Mirage* for the Australian Broadcast Company (ABC) and Universal Records. The New York premiere of *Mirage* was given in March 1998 by the contest's Gold Medallist at Merkin Concert Hall in New York City.

As a pianist, Ms. Fábregas has performed throughout Spain, England, Korea, Japan, China, Taiwan, and the United States. She has appeared in Alice Tully Hall, Merkin Concert Hall, Carnegie Recital Hall, the Joyce Theater in New York City, The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington D.C., the United Nations Conference in Beijing, The Place Theater in London, Palau de la Musica Catalana in Barcelona, and the Muanuel De Falla International Festival in Granada, Spain. She has also performed live on WQXR - FM "New York Spotlight", WNYC - FM "Around New York", National Public Radio's "Performance Today" and the Voice of America. Currently, Elisenda Fábregas is an Adjunct Professor of Piano at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Program Notes

Andante Appassionato (1996) for flute solo was commissioned by Tallon Sterling Perkes, principal flutist of the San Antonio Symphony who performed its premiere at the San Antonio Museum of Art in San Antonio, Texas, on November 10, 1996. This concert was a musical event related to the museum's special exhibit Catalan Masters of the Twentieth Century: from *Gaudí to Tapies*.

Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano (1994) was written for Australian violinist Benjamin Breen who premiered it with the composer at the piano, at the Mostly Women Composers Festival on May 22, 1994, at Columbia University Teachers College in New York City. The rhythmic Allegro develops from a single motif, which keeps changing and growing in the midst of irregular meters and syncopations. The Elegy is very lyrical with abundant use of expressive dissonances. The contrasting third movement, Chase, consists of the motif that revolves around itself, sometimes in canonic writing, with a syncopated theme that alternates between the piano and the violin.

Mirage (1997) was commissioned for the 1997 San Antonio International Piano Competition in Memory of Andrew Russell Gurwitz. The competition took place on October 19-25, 1997, in San Antonio, Texas. *Mirage* was a required piece to be performed by the ten selected contestants at the semifinals of the competition. A special award for its best performance was given to pianist Roger Wright who did the premiere on October 25, 1997.

The subtitle of *Mirage* comes from a fragment of one of my poems, setting the mood for the shimmering beginning of the piece "...I felt myself floating in a vast and magic space among tingling and shining stars...". In spite of the suggestive title however, there is no story behind the piece. Even though it may evoke images, the music of *Mirage* is abstract in nature. *Mirage* describes various emotional states reflected by build-ups of tension and relaxation and changes in mood and tempo. Both thematic transformation, developing variation and motivic development are techniques used in the development of the musical material. Formally speaking, it consists of four sections •ABCA' with a first section recapitulated at the end and two contrasting sections in the center, each one being a theme and variations. The tension built in Section A is released in the slow and peaceful section B; section C strives to build tension again culminating in the climactic point of the piece which leads back to the recapitulation of a modified section •A'. The piece finishes with a peaceful coda. *Mirage* is a very 'coloristic' piece, requiring from the performer an excellent sense of touch, as well as a fluid and sparkling technique; it also requires from the performer a sense of drama and a concept of line to bring forth the driving and forward looking nature of the piece.

Five Songs for Soprano and Piano (1986) was inspired by five poems of the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca (1898-1936). These include: El Silencio, La Luna Negra, Las Seis Cuerdas, and Clamor from the collection *Poema del Cante Jondo* (1921), and La Mano Imposible from *El Diván del Tamarit* (1931-1935). Lorca's poetry is born from the continuous juxtaposition of contrasting and opposing symbols, which attempt to negate each other. His poetry is born from a "death duel". His obsession with death, which he referred to as the "Spanish lover", also pervades his work.

In El Silencio (The Silence), Lorca materializes silence by telling us to listen to it. It is the quietest song of the collection with a certain purity imparted by the modal quality of the music.

Program Notes

Some symbols in Lorca's work have dual meanings. *The Moon*, for example, represents both death threats (personified by women that enchant men and lead them to death) and eroticism. In *La Luna Negra*, the black moon is a terrible presence and a threat to the unwary. The music is given a floating quality by the lack of a tonal center and by the continuous trills in the piano part which surround the soprano melody. The eerie character of the music sustains the ambiance of magic and incantation that permeate Lorca's poem.

In *Las Seis Cuerdas* (Six Strings) Lorca glorifies the guitar. This instrument is to Lorca a symbol of remembrance of lost souls and a connection with the dead; "the guitar makes dreams weep" and lets the sobbing of lost souls escape through its black wooden well. As in the previous songs, melodic dissonance in the vocal lines and piano writing portrays the anguish of the text.

Sonata No. 1 for flute and piano (1995) was commissioned by Tallon Perkes, principal flutist of the San Antonio Symphony, who gave its world premiere in New York City at the National Flute Convention in August 1996. Barbara Siesel has also championed this work performing it with the composer in Beijing, at the United Nations Conference on Women's Rights in 1995, in Chaiyi, Taiwan, at the SCI National Convention in Florida International University, and at Chicago, Texas and New York Music Festivals. This sonata is published by Alphonse Leduc & Cie in Paris.

Sonata No. 1 consists of four contrasting movements. The first movement (Allegro Moderato) is written in a virtuosic manner for the flute in an octatonic language. In the exposition two related themes consisting of staccato sixteenths and ornamented repeated notes are first introduced by the flute in a soloistic manner and later joined by the piano. The mood is sometimes playful and at others sardonic. A fermata introduces a second theme in the flute (Recitative - Adagio) characterized by its lyricism. In the development section the three themes heard so far are developed and interact with one other. This conflict is partially delayed at a fermata, where the flute and piano play a short recitative, and later resolved in a short coda that acts as a recapitulation.

The second movement (Largo) is of a more contemplative and reflective nature in the two outer sections, which consist of a long and sustained flute line punctuated with occasional chords in the piano. In the middle section, both the piano and the flute develop the flute theme, and the music becomes thicker in texture and rhythmically more active. The dynamic and rhythmic shape of the movement is that of an arch, with a climax in the center of the movement. The characteristic intervals of this movement are the descending minor second and the ascending major second.

The third movement (Scherzo) is light and playful in character but with an air of restlessness given by the unpredictable syncopations, repeated notes, and constant changes of meter. The characteristic interval is the ascending interval of a minor second. The constant rhythmic activity anticipates the last movement to which it leads without a pause.

The energy and drive projected by the fourth movement (Allegro molto con brio) comes from the continuous use of a motif in triplets played by both the flute and piano at different times. The other characteristic interval is that of the descending minor second normally used in the melodic lines written in eighth notes.

PROGRAM

Andante Appassionato for Solo Flute (1996) Elisenda Fábregas
(born 1955)

Kimberly Risinger, *flute*

Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano (1994)

Allegro
Adagio
Chase

Karen Collier, *violin*
Elisenda Fábregas, *piano*

* Mirage (1997)

Elisenda Fábregas, *piano*

Intermission

Five Songs for Soprano and Piano (1986)

El Silencio
La Luna Negra
Las Seis Cuerdas

Michelle Vought, *soprano*
Elisenda Fábregas, *piano*

Sonata No. 1 for Flute and Piano (1995)

Allegro con spirito
Largo
Allegretto scherzo
Allegro molto con brio

Kimberly Risinger, *flute*
Elisenda Fábregas, *piano*

* commissioned for the 1997 San Antonio International Piano Competition in memory of Andrew Russel Gurwitz.

Vocal translations

(translations by Elisenda Fábregas)

EL SILENCIO

(from Poema del Cante Jondo)

Oye, hijo mio, el silencio.
Es un silencio ondulado,
un silencio,
donde resbalan valles y ecos,
y que inclina las frentes
hacia el suelo.

LA LUNA NEGRA

(from Poema del Cante Jondo)

En el cielo de la copla
asoma la luna negra
sobre las nubes moradas.

Y en el suelo de la copla,
hay yunques negros que aguardan
poner al rojo la luna.

*copla = couplet, a two-line verse form

LAS SEIS CUERDAS

(from Poema del Cante Jondo)

La guitarra,
hace llorar a los sueños.
El sollozo de las almas
perdidas,
se escapa por su boca
redonda.

Y como la tarántula
teje una gran estrella
para cazar suspiros,
que flotan en su negro
alijibe de madera.

THE SILENCE

(from *Poem of the Sing Jondo*)

Listen, my son, to the silence.
It's a rolling silence,
a silence,
where in valleys and echoes slide,
and which bends foreheads
down towards the ground.

The Black Moon

(from *Poem of the Sing Jondo*)

On the sky of the "copla" *
the black moon appears
above the purple clouds.

On the ground of the "copla",
there are black anvils
waiting to make the moon red.

THE SIX STRINGS

(from *Poem of the Sing Jondo*)

The guitar
makes dreams weep.
The sobbing of the lost
souls,
escapes through its round
mouth.

And like the tarantula
it spins a large star
to trap the sighs,
floating in its black
wooden water tank.