Austin Chasnick, clarinet

Senior Recital

with

I-Chen Yeh, piano

December 10, 2022
1:00 p.m.
Oakland West Campus
Program

Sonatina for clarinet and piano (1957)  Bohuslav Martinů
(1890-1959)

Deux Mélodies Hébraïques (1914 | 2022)  Maurice Ravel
(1875-1937)
arr. Austin Chasnick

I. Kaddisch
II. L’Enigme Eternelle

Introduction, Theme and Variations (1819)  Gioachino Rossini
(1792-1868)

Intermission
Trio in B-flat major, Op. 11 for clarinet, cello, and piano (“Gassenhauer Trio”) (1798)  
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

I. Allegro con brio  
II. Adagio  
III. Tema: Pria ch’io l’impegno

Joan Hovda, cello  
Yang Yang, piano

Schvitz 2 Exist  
(commissioned work, premiere)  
Zoe Cutler (b. 1996)
As a young composer, Bohuslav Martinů moved to Prague at age 16 to study at the Conservatory. There he was first exposed to the music of Debussy, whose music had an immediate impact on his developing compositional style. When he moved to Paris in 1923, he became familiar with the music of Stravinsky and other various modernistic musical trends, all of which were soon incorporated into his emerging style.

Martinů composed Sonatina for Clarinet and Piano in 1956. The Sonatina uses a variety of dance-like rhythms and pointed articulations. A combination of hemiolas and syncopated rhythms often obscures the beat. Even some of the most important cadences are syncopated, which may give an auditory illusion of the clarinet arriving early in certain scalar figures.

The first movement is a test of rhythmic coordination, with complex interplay between the piano and clarinet. The second movement explores the entire range of the clarinet in a flowing, lyrical melody. The third movement features dazzling trills, soaring runs, and flashy techniques. In this final movement, Martinů keeps the clarinet an eighth note ahead of the piano in the counterpoint that governs the music. Overall, the Sonatina utilizes rhythmic vitality and well placed changes of tempo and mood to construct a cohesive, charming, and extroverted piece.

Program notes:
Maurice Ravel | 1875-1937

Deux Mélodies Hébraïques

With popular works like Boléro, Daphnis Et Chloé, and Le Tombeau De Couperin, Maurice Ravel is no stranger to classical audiences across the world. *Deux Mélodies Hébraïques* is one of his compositions that has not seen the stage nearly as often. Commissioned in 1914 by Alvina Alvi, a soprano at the Imperial Opera in St. Petersburg, the piece includes two songs: “Kaddisch”, and “Die alte Kasche” (translated to French - “L’Enigme Eternelle”).

The first movement, “Kaddisch,” is a musical setting of a Hebrew prayer. Commonly referred to as the “Mourner’s Kaddish,” the prayer is recited to honor those who have passed. The Kaddish is traditionally recited every month after the passing of a loved one, as well as on the Yahrzeit, the anniversary of their passing. As the piece was originally written for voice, Ravel followed the techniques used by cantors in Jewish services. The melody is slow and heavily ornamented. Frequent use of neighbor tones and appoggiatura grace notes help mimic the sounds one might hear in a synagogue.

The second movement, titled “L’Enigme Eternelle” or “The Eternal Question,” is a reharmonization of a yiddish folk song. The text of the original piece describes questions that one might ask the world, only to receive a nonsense response: “Tra la tra di ri di rom.” Ravel sets the text against the piano playing fifths and sevenths. At the beginning of the piece he leaves out the third, avoiding major and minor. The lack of major or minor accentuates the question at hand. In the middle of the piece, Ravel adds the third with an accompanying major ninth. The extended triads are very common in Ravel’s compositions. The first line of text returns at the end, again without the third, showing that the question will be asked for generations to come.

I found this piece by Ravel when looking for something to play at High Holy Day services at my synagogue. The first movement was a perfect fit for services so I got to work on arranging the piece. This set of songs means a lot to me as I rarely find Jewish music from the classical canon to play. I pride myself in my Jewish culture and heritage and am really excited to share it with everyone.

- Austin Chasnick

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Text & Translations

I. Kaddisch

Let the glory of G-d be extolled, let G-d’s great name be hallowed in the world whose creation G-d willed. May G-d’s rule soon prevail in our own day, our own lives, and the life of all Israel, and let us say: Amen.

Let G-d’s great name be blessed for ever and ever.

Let the name of the Holy One, the Blessed One, be glorified, exalted, and honored, though G-d is beyond all praises, songs, and adorations that we can utter, and let us say: Amen.

For us and for all Israel, may the blessing of peace and the promise of life come true, and let us say: Amen.

May the One who causes peace to reign in the high heavens, let peace descend on us, on all Israel, and all the world, and let us say: Amen.

Translation by Austin Chasnick

II. L’Enigme Eternelle

Frägt die Velt die alte Casche
Tra la tra la la la la
Ent fernt men
Tra la la...
Un as men will kennen sagen
Tra la la...
Frägt die Velt die alte Casche
Tra la la...

World, you question us:
Tra la tra la la la la
The answer comes:
Tra la la ...
If you cannot be answered:
Tra la la ...
World, you question us:
Tra la la ...

Translation © Richard Stokes, author of: The Book of Lieder (Faber); The Complete Songs of Hugo Wolf (Faber); A French Song Companion (Oxford University Press); The Spanish Song Companion (Scarecrow Press); The Penguin Book of English Song (Penguin Classics); and J.S. Bach: The Complete Cantatas (Scarecrow Press). Provided via Oxford Lieder (www.oxfordlieder.co.uk)
Gioachino Rossini | 1792-1868
Introduction, Theme and Variations

Gioachino Rossini was born in 1792 in Pesaro, a seaside resort town on the coast of Italy directly east of Florence. His father was a town trumpeter who also played horn in local theaters; his mother was an opera singer. Soon after his birth, his family moved their center of activities to Bologna (approximately 225 miles northwest of Pesaro). Here Rossini began his musical study while his parents toured various Italian theaters. He had already begun to compose chamber music when, at the age of 15, he enrolled in courses in theory and cello at the Liceo Communale of Bologna. In 1808 he wrote a prize-winning cantata which was produced at the Liceo. The following year at the age of 17, he wrote his first piece for the clarinet with orchestra, Variations in C major.

Commissions for operas soon began to arrive from Venice, the first of which resulted in the composition of La Cambiale di matrimonio. From this point on Rossini was totally consumed with his opera composition, each production bringing demand for another. From 1815 until 1823, he was under contract to write at least two operas per year to be produced in Naples, at La Scala in Milan, and at the Italian Opera Theatre in Vienna. Later, following a brief London visit, he accepted an offer to manage the Theatre-Italien in Paris. After one of his greatest triumphs, the production of William Tell in Paris in 1829, he abruptly closed his career as an opera composer at the young age of thirty-seven.

With the exception of a twelve year stint as president of the Liceo Musicale in Bologna where he taught singing to exceptionally talented pupils, Rossini spent the rest of his life in Paris. He received a generous pension from the French government until his death in 1868. In his later years he composed numerous piano pieces, songs and instrumental pieces which he called “Peches de vieillesse” (“Sins of Old Age”). The Prelude, Theme and Variations for horn and piano was written during this period.

Although the date of the composition of the clarinet Introduction, Theme and Variations remains unknown, it is assumed that it dates from the opera years. It is interesting to note that Rossini rarely wrote for the low register of the clarinet until his last three operas, Moïse (1827), Le Comte Ory (1828), and Guillaume Tell (1829).

Program notes reproduced from the publisher:
Ludwig van Beethoven | 1770-1827
Trio in B-flat major, Op. 11 for clarinet, cello, and piano (“Gassenhauer Trio”)

“Before I begin work, I must have something to eat.” This uninspired title, using Joseph Weigl’s presently famous aria from the opera L’amor Marinaro as the theme of the trio’s third movement, gained the entire piece its vast popularity under the commonly known name “Gassenhauer Trio” (“popular song”).

Beethoven, always determined to innovate and excel, published three piano trios as his Opus 1 cycle in 1795, hoping to draw wider attention to his music by focusing on the still-undeveloped medium of the piano trio. However, reactions were not all-positive: the great master of the time and Beethoven’s teacher, Joseph Haydn, declared his Op.1 Nr.3 Trio in C minor, dearest to Beethoven of all of his compositions so far, too extreme for the Viennese public. For the next thirteen years, Beethoven refrained from composing any major piano trio. The Opus 11 Trio, originally for piano, clarinet (or violin) and cello, is the one exception. In it, Beethoven responds to the critique of the older master: the extreme elements in Beethoven’s style are reined in, making only modest, subtle appearances; the general tone is pleasant and communicative.

However, even this restrained, relatively ‘harmless’ trio, was described by the Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung as “…stellenweise eben nicht leicht, aber doch fließender als manche andere sachen vom verfasser…” (“at various points not easy, but still more flowing than other works from this author…”), and indeed, there are still abrupt moments in the piece: the sharp contrast in the first movement between the F major fortissimo close of the first theme and the pianissimo D major of the second theme; the first movement’s devious, “fake-wall” coda; or the third movement’s variation for piano solo with its confusion of displaced rhythms. The effect on the listeners at the premiere must have been one of equal parts shock and delight!

There is one last story that can be related regarding Beethoven and this Opus 11 Trio. Beethoven decided to perform this trio in a musical duel against the famous pianist and composer Daniel Steibelt – one can imagine it was an ideal platform from which he could display both his fresh compositional ideas and own capabilities as a pianist. His rival, however, was apparently not impressed with Beethoven’s abilities: he challenged Beethoven head-on, improvising his own variations to Joseph Weigl’s theme! Beethoven’s reaction was furious: he took Steibelt’s score, placed it upside down on the piano and hammered the music out on the keyboard with one finger. The result of this evening was a lifelong rivalry between the two men, not to mention immense embarrassment to the host of the evening, Count Moritz von Fries...

We, however, more than 200 years later, remove our gaze from Beethoven’s bad manners and take great pleasure in hearing this trio that, despite all of Beethoven’s attempts to appease the gatekeepers of tradition, still display all of his signature trademarks of humour, wit and great beauty.

Program notes by the Oberon Trio
Imagine kvetching over some decaf espresso with your queer, neurodivergent, Jewish sister-in-law. Schvitz 2 Exist is a quirky collection of rhapsodic moments that might make you say, “Did they give me caffineated espresso by accident?” or “Are you sure this is oat milk? I forget what cow milk tastes like.” The piece begins with a quick wail before settling into a solemn procession of sadness. But don’t lose hope! Soon our procession is running late for work and anxiety is high. Dodging oncoming traffic, we eventually break into a fever dream scherzo. Imagination is running wild. After a few moments of calm punctuated by sobs, the piece ends with a fury of syncopation and hyperfocus. Oh the sweet, sweet smell of sweat. We need it to live! It’s called your body’s natural functions, sweaty. (They definitely gave me caffine, didn’t they.)

- Zoe Cutler, program notes

There are a variety of techniques used in Schvitz 2 Exist, which interact to emphasize the modern klezmer style, a style that frequently features the clarinet. Klezmer clarinet utilizes a variety of extended techniques such as krekhts (קרקץ; yiddish for “sob”; a form of pitch bending to imitate weeping or sobbing), tzchoks (צחוק; yiddish for “laugh”; producing a cackle-like sound), vibrato, smearing, and growling, all of which are found within this piece. Through the composition, Cutler uses the Freygish mode (Phrygian dominant) which is a mode used across many forms of traditional Jewish music. One notable use of the Freygish mode is in the popular Hebrew folk song: Hava Nagila. The title, Schvitz 2 Exist, is very fitting for this piece as it uses the Yiddish word schvitz, meaning “to sweat.” With the difficulty of the piece, there is no way a clarinetist can play through without beginning to schvitz.

In our first meeting about commissioning a piece for my recital, Zoe and I discussed different styles to include. I knew I wanted a piece for the end of the recital to “show off” my skills. I also knew I wanted to explore my Jewish roots through Klezmer. Klezmer is the yiddish name for the musical tradition of Ashkenazi Jews of Central and Eastern Europe, the same culture my ancestors were a part of. Being the recital-ending piece, we discussed making it sound unexpected and even sarcastic at times. When I first discovered Zoe’s music, I was instantly drawn to her piece Personality Test (2020) and its playful, humorous style. Throughout my time working on Schvitz 2 Exist, I frequently had the thought “can you write something easier for once?”, just as it says in her bio. I am extremely happy that her response within the music was: “no.” I had an amazing time working with Zoe and bringing this piece to life.

- Austin Chasnick
Biographies

Austin Chasnick, clarinet

Austin Chasnick has been attending Oakland University since Fall 2018. For the past five years, he has been studying to receive a double major in Instrumental Music Education and Clarinet Performance with a Music Theory Minor. In the Winter 2023 semester, Austin will be student teaching at Bloomfield Hills High School with band director Alan Posner.

Throughout his time at Oakland, Austin has studied clarinet under Dr. George Stoffan, Ralph Skiano (Detroit Symphony Orchestra), and Michelle Tschirhart. He has been fortunate enough to participate in masterclasses with world-renowned clarinetists Frank Cohen, Mark Nuccio, John Bruce Yeh, Stephen Williamson, and more. Austin has played in the Oakland Symphony Orchestra, Oakland University Wind Symphony, Oakland University Symphonic Band, and Oakland University Big Band. In the Spring of 2022, Austin had the pleasure of performing alongside Marissa Lockwood in a concerto with the OU Wind Symphony. This past summer, he performed in *Acis and Galatea*, the opera put on by the School of Music, Theatre and Dance.

While at Oakland University, Austin held positions within Phi Mu Alpha, the National Association for Music Education, and the OU School of Music, Theatre and Dance Student Advocacy Board. He teaches private lessons to students in Metro Detroit and is a staff member for the marching band at Lamphere High School in Madison Heights. Austin also currently plays in the Oakland Symphony Orchestra and in ensembles throughout the Metro Detroit area.
Dr. I-Chen Yeh, piano

A native of Kaohsiung, Taiwan, award-winning pianist I-Chen Yeh enjoys an international career as a solo and collaborative performer. Among her significant accomplishments include competition prizes throughout Taiwan, Japan, and the United States. A performer devoted to contemporary music, Yeh’s solo and collaborative performances strive to highlight a new and exciting repertory. Her passion for new music has led to collaborations with notable composers such as Pulitzer Prize winners Steven Stucky and Ellen Taaffe Zwilich. In addition, she has commissioned and premiered works for solo piano and other chamber music by David Rakowski, Marc Mellits, Greg Sandow, Andres Carrizo, Timothy Stulman, David Gillingham, Andrea Reinkemeyer, Anthony Donofrio, and Jeff Weston.

Yeh has appeared at many world-renowned music festivals, including the Aspen Music Festival, the Bowdoin Music Festival, Bowling Green State University’s New Music and Art Festivals, Eastern Music Festival, the Internationale Wiener Musik Seminar, Threshold Electroacoustic Festival, and the Ball State University New Music Festival. Recent concert appearances include performances at (le) poisson rouge (NYC), the Interlochen Center for the Arts, the Yamaha Performing Artist Center (Taipei, Taiwan), the Taiwan National Concert Hall, and many Universities and Conservatories throughout the United States.

Yeh holds degrees from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music (BM), the Eastman School of Music (MM), and Bowling Green State University (DMA). Her primary teachers include Laura Melton, Angela Cheng, and Thomas Schumacher. She has also performed in master-classes led by internationally renowned pianists such as Stephen Hough, Nelita True, Robert Levin, John Perry, and James Giles. Yeh is an active member of Music Teachers National Association (MTNA), where she served as coordinator of the Ohio junior and senior division piano competitions. In addition, she is a member of several professional chamber music ensembles, including the Heisler/Yeh Duo with saxophonist, Jeffrey Heisler, the Primary Colors Trio (saxophone, piano, and percussion), and an exciting new piano duo with pianist Jiung Yoon. Currently, Dr. Yeh serves on the faculty of Oakland University (MI) as Instructor of Applied Piano and Coordinator of Instrumental Collaborative Piano.
Joan Hovda, cello

Cellist Joan Hovda performs regularly as Assistant Principal Cellist with the Oakland Symphony Orchestra, and with the Rochester Symphony. She had previously performed with the Orchestra of Southern Utah and in productions of the Utah Shakespearean Festival. In addition, Ms. Hovda has performed with many of the leading ensembles throughout the Washington D.C. area. She has appeared with the Alexandria (VA) Symphony and Prince William (VA) Symphony, and has also performed with the Annapolis (MD) Symphony, Fairfax (VA) Symphony, and the Roanoke (VA) Symphony. She served in the United States Air Force Band from 1997 until 2001, and also performed with the United States Air Force Orchestra and Chamber Players. Ms. Hovda has performed with the New World Symphony, Manhattan Chamber Orchestra and Ann Arbor Symphony. She has participated in the Chautauqua Institution Music Festival, Grand Teton Music Festival, and the East-West International Music Festival in Altenburg, Germany. She received her Master of Music degree from the Manhattan School of Music and her Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Michigan. Ms. Hovda’s principal teachers have included Jennifer Langham, Lorne Munroe, Nina de Veritch, and Jerome Jelinek.

Yang Yang, piano

Yang graduated from the Wuhan Conservatory of Music in China and entered the piano area of Oakland University in 2021 under the supervision of Dr. Tian Tian, and is currently studying as a teaching assistant. She has received the Outstanding Collaborative Piano MaTilDa Award for 2022. I-Chen Yeh, applied instructor of piano, says “Yang served as the collaborative pianist for the strings and flute studios this year. Yang is an intelligent, highly motivated, responsible, and personable student. She is an outstanding musician with deep musical sensitivity. Yang is a model student in every aspect. It was my great pleasure to work with her this year and no one is more deserving than her to receive this award.”

At the same time, Yang is also active in many competitions and music festivals, she won the Outstanding Award in the “Academy Cup” Piano Duet Competition and the second prize in the “Yangtze River” Piano Ensemble Competition, and acted as the art director in the Wu Han Vocal Music Art Competition and Composition Concert in Wuhan Conservatory of Music. She participated in the Amalfi Music Festival in Italy, and was invited to perform at the Young Artists Concert in Maiori. She has also performed in master-classes led by internationally renowned pianists such as Boris Berman, Yoshi Nagai, James Giles, Stjin De Cock, Hong Xu.
Zoe Cutler

Zoe Cutler is a multimedia weirdo based in Detroit, Michigan. Her work has been described as "Itchy and Scratchy meets James Bond" and "Can you write something easier for once?" Her primary instrument is the trombone, but she can play a mean slide whistle, and sometimes pretends to be a whole brass quintet on YouTube. She is a member of free improvisation group CCdT and the Dr. Prof. Leonard King Orchestra.

Zoe Cutler’s arrangements and compositions are published by Zoe’s Sounds Publishing (ASCAP). Her work has been commissioned by Diversify the Stand, Balaton Chamber Brass, and Timothy McAllister and Liz Ames, among others. She holds an M.M. in Trombone Performance from the University of Michigan and a B.M. in Trombone Performance and Jazz Arranging from Oberlin Conservatory. Her teachers have included trombonists Robin Eubanks, Lee Allen, David Jackson, and Jonathan Holtfreter, as well as writers Jay Ashby, Elizabeth Ogonek, and Ellen Rowe.

In her free time, she is a Coding Mentor at the MSU/Apple Developer Academy – Detroit. In her other free time, she tries a new hobby each week, from brewing to ceramics, in the hopes that someday something will pan out and she can quit trombone once and for all.
Thank You

I would like to thank everyone who attended my recital. I appreciate all of your support and am excited to share this program with you. I would also like to thank the production team who has helped set up, manage the facility, and record audio for my recital: Katherine Boersma, Megan Herald, Terry Herald, and their team. Thank you to Jessica Stasik for photography for the posters and for recording video.

Thank you to all the faculty and staff who have helped me through my studies. Thank you to Dr. George Stoffan (Professor of Clarinet), Dr. Gregory Cunningham (Director of the OU Wind Symphony and Oakland Symphony Orchestra, Professor of Conducting), Dr. Pamela Klena (Director of OU Symphonic Band, Music Education Faculty Advisor, Professor of Music Education), Ralph Skiano (Professor of Clarinet, Principal Clarinet of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra), and Michelle Tschirhart (Professor of Clarinet). Without each of you, I would not be the performer and educator that I am today.

Thank you to all of my friends who have supported me throughout my time at Oakland. Each of you has helped in your own way: some with understanding content in classes, some with my technique and musicality, others with just making it through college. You all are amazing and I wouldn’t give you up for the world.

Thank you to my second family, the Matthews. You have helped me through so much and I appreciate everything. Thank you to my lovely girlfriend of seven years, Nicole. How have you put up with me this long? I love you.

Finally, thank you to my family. Mom, Dad, Ilissa, and Brett. Without you, I wouldn’t be up on this stage right now. I love you all.