

Notes from Andrew Harley Master Class

Sunday, March 18, 2018

Naomi Brodsky, violin and Hala Tomey, piano

Violin Sonata in C sharp Minor, Op. 21, *Allegro appassionato* by Erno Dohanyi

About the composer: Hungarian composer Erno Dohanyi concertized as both piano soloist and chamber player. He came to Florida State University in the mid-1900s. As a composer, Brahms and Liszt were two major influences.

Discussion and tips:

- Staying together:
Know the part(s) of the other player(s). Harley suggested memorizing one's own music, then when playing together, follow the music of the other performer(s). Another tip: Regularly practice your part with a metronome. You need to know "what true North is." Further, an accompanist might sing the part of another player while playing her own part.
- Volume versus density of sound:
Harley explained that when the sound becomes too sustained, people tend to think the pianist is too loud. However, it might be because the sound is too dense. The pedal must be used with discretion so the blended sound is clear and not too dense.
- Positioning:
Make certain the performers can see one another and the violinist can see the piano.
- Miscellaneous:
The opening notes of the piano are not the melody but give the music depth.
The slurred notes—i.e., long-short, strong-weak—demand the same attention as do the dynamics.

Victor Dyni, piano

Prelude in E Major, Op. 30, No 9 by Reinhold Gliere

About the composer: Reinhold Gliere was a Russian composer who lived well into the 20th century. He loved the minor 2nd and interesting harmonies.

Discussion and tips:

- Harley observation:
There is beauty and sincerity in what Victor is doing. The "ability to change the molecules in the room is very special. It's not easy to teach that kind of sensibility."
- Tempo:
Use the metronome in all stages of learning, and when using it, ascertain you are synchronized with it.

Map out the tempos in the music like you are laying train tracks. “Put down those tracks carefully and then you won’t derail.”

When using the metronome, play as beautifully as you can within the confines of the tempo structure.

- Russian music:
There is something so attractive about Russian music. Part of its beauty is that it is amorphous. There is mystery. It washes over. Be careful, or the audience will find themselves drowning. They might tune it out because they do not know where it is going. You can get chocolate syrup out of every bar, but after a while, the effect is lost.
- Melody, base and accompaniment:
There is a need to distinguish between melody, base and accompaniment, especially in very turbulent sections. Think about the hierarchy of the piece. Bring much higher dynamic range to vertical events. Melody, base, accompaniment--think more analytically about “what’s on first, what’s on second, what’s on third.” Accompaniment often gets inflated because it is technically difficult. Then everything gets inflated.

Louis Reichwein, oboe with Kuo-Wei Wang, piano

Arioso by Sol Cohen

About the composer: Cohen was an American composer and violinist who played in a number of symphonies. *Arioso* was written in a very traditional, romantic style.

Discussion and tips:

Harley observation: “One can gild the lily. But the lily is beautiful and doesn’t need help.”

- Regulating the playing:
Playing without the “gilding” in the first four measures of the oscillating harmony makes the modulations clearer, and the listener is kept in suspense.

While the physicality of playing may be pleasurable to the performer, it is not necessarily so to the audience. “It’s [physicality] a different facet of music.”

The thing that is impressive is a performer’s control of a perfectly straight line that is beautiful and perfectly regulated, both rhythmically and sonically.

Everything about playing the piano is about having the widest possible palette.

It’s easy for pianists to be superficially impressive because of the physicality. But you can produce so many types of sound unrelated to dynamics.

Patrick Shea, piano

Menuet from *Suite Bergamasque* by Debussy

French music:

French music mimics a time when France was number one, and it calls to mind an instrument other than piano such as the lute or harpsichord. The *Bergamasque* takes old dance forms and reinvents them.

Glissandos:

Black note glissandos, which are frequent in French music, differ from white note glissandos. Harley advised using an open hand for black note glissandos and the thumb for white note glissandos.

How to practice:

When learning, we learn as a series of connected vertical elements. However, we need to practice horizontally as much as possible, rather than vertically. Identify a horizontal element around which you can attach the rest of the piece.