

Program notes for Soundbites: Celebration!

Le Tombeau de Couperin

Ravel, Maurice (1875-1937)

arr. Schmitt/Riou

- I. Prélude. Vif
- II. Fugue. Allegro moderato
- III. Forlane. Allegretto
- IV. Rigaudon. Assez vif
- V. Menuet. Allegro moderato
- VI. Toccata. Vif

Ravel wrote *Le Tombeau de Couperin* for solo piano in 1917. The name 'Couperin' on the title wasn't to suggest that this piece is an imitation of François Couperin's work or to pay tributes to him, but to pay homage to Baroque composers as a general through incorporating Baroque elements into this piece. Each movement is dedicated to the memory of a friend (or in the fourth movement, two brothers) who had died fighting in World War I. Although the word 'Tomb' in the title has sombrous connotation, Ravel wrote them in a light-hearted manner with incorporation of humours. This has drawn many critics criticizing his attitude towards death. However, he would focus on celebrating the life his friends have lived rather than mourning over their death.

Ravel rearranged this work into an orchestral version later in 1919, omitting Fugue and Toccata. Since then, it has remained as one of the most popular orchestral work by Ravel. Later, many composers had orchestrated the two movements Ravel had omitted. This Oboe and Piano version by Christian Schimtt and Laurent Riou is based on Ravel's partial orchestration from 1919. It also includes the two movements omitted by Ravel so now, oboist can enjoy the entire suite as well.

Concerto for Oboe, H.353

Martinu, Bohuslav (1890-1959)

- I. Moderato
- II. Poco andante
- III. Poco allegro

Martinu wrote this concerto for his fellow Czech countryman, Jiri Tancibudek and it was premiered in 1956 in Sydney, with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. The score was published after Martinu's death and Tancibudek noticed many errors and missing cadenzas. So, in the 1980s, he and James Brody at Indiana University published a list of corrections with some interpretational suggestions.

The format is traditional, in fast-slow-fast structure. The first movement begins with a 6/8 dance-like opening played by the piano. The oboe then joins in to play a long pastoral melody. Later, the piano has an agitated transition, leading the music into the clockwork-like development section between oboe and piano. Then, the music arrives at a well-paced slower dance section, slowly building up to a variation of the development section. Unlike how it ends the first time in development section, this time it ends with a conviction.

After the festive first movement, comes a darker second movement. The piano has a slow introduction, paving a way for the oboe to come in, constantly wandering. Then the piano plays a safer sensation but the oboe responds with an even more worried cadenza. After the turmoil, the music then finally comes to a resolving and assurance ending.

The third movement has an edgy rhythmic introduction before the oboe comes in with a joyful theme. Later, the oboe plays two cadenzas before coming back to a variant of the theme. The final section of this movement is a joyous coda with consecutive thrills from the oboe and constant build up from the piano before it ends triumphantly.