



CAL POLY

SAN LUIS OBISPO

Music Department
California Polytechnic State University



Zack Fisher ♦ tuba ♦



A Senior Recital in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for a Bachelor of Arts in Music



November 13, 2011



Sunday at 2 p.m



Davidson Music Center



Room 218



Sponsored by the Cal Poly Music Department and College of Liberal Arts

Program

Senior Recital

Zack Fisher, tuba

Paul Woodring, piano

Concerto for Tuba.....Eric Ewazen (b. 1954)

Andante con moto

Andante espressivo

Allegro ritmico

Suite for Unaccompanied Cello, No. 4 BWV 1010.... Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Sarabande

Transcription by Ralph Sauer

Bourrée I

— Intermission —

Sonata for Bass Tuba and PianoThomas Beversdorf (1924-1981)

Allegro con moto

Allegretto con grazioso e espressivo

Allegro con brio

The Carnival of Venice.....Jean-Baptiste Arban (1825-1889)

Acknowledgments

Roy, you pushed me harder than anyone for the last years and often made my life miserable. You always knew when I needed to be torn down and when I needed encouragement. I would never be where I am today without you and I wish you could be here to see the final result of our time spent together.

Mom and Dad, never once have you questioned my ambitions, regardless of how strange it must have sounded when I told you I wanted to study the tuba. Your unwavering support in every aspect of my life has helped me through so many of the tough times I have faced in college.

Faculty, I have had more contact with some of you than others, but every single one of you has contributed to my education in your own way. I am often stunned by the number of outstanding teachers such a tiny department has attracted.

My fellow music majors musicians and friends, the fact that all of you are here today speaks for itself. It has been a privilege to study and perform together. I am so glad that I have this opportunity to share my music with you.

Program Notes

The Carnival of Venice is literally a textbook example of a theme-and-variation form. It is not difficult to guess what constitutes a theme and variations: it starts off with a theme, and then presents a number of paraphrased statements, each of which changes the theme in some way. Theme and variations can be created using any number of different devices to modify themes. *The Carnival of Venice* uses each variation to showcase a different technique that was learned at some point earlier in the method book. The theme of the piece is an old folk tune of unknown origins, but some listeners might recognize it as being a German children's song, "My Hat, It Has Three Corners." This tune has been used many times by many different composers; for instance, Nicolo Paganini also composed a theme and variations for solo violin based on this tune around the same time Arban wrote *The Carnival of Venice*.

The first variation has several different thematic ideas, but all of them have one thing in common: the use of an ornamentation that is called the turn. A turn "zig-zags" around a note, visiting its upper and lower neighbors before ending on the written note. A turn is ordinarily not that difficult, but during this variation, the turns need to be played much faster than they normally would be.

Often some of the most dreaded and avoided techniques among brass players are multiple-tonguing. The second variation is an exercise in triple-tonguing. This is a technique that is used to articulate groupings of three notes when they are too fast to play normally. When a brass player begins to play, he will use a syllable such as "ta" to start the note. To triple-tongue, a player will use a pattern of articulations using both the front and back of the tongue. The "action" of the tongue resembles syllables such as "ta-ta-ka" or "ta-ka-ta," depending on the desired accent. The main challenge while using this technique is to keep each attack equally weighted so that it is difficult to tell that a player is triple-tonguing at all.

The third variation is divided into two parts and contains the most variety in *The Carnival of Venice*. The first section is the slowest of all the variations and is also the least technically demanding. Unlike the rest of the piece that showcases technical prowess, this section challenges the player to be expressive and show emotion while still bringing out the theme. The second section shifts back up to a much faster tempo and is based on playing scalar lines while switching back and forth quickly between articulated notes and slurred notes.

The fourth and final variation is possibly the most difficult of all the sections of this piece. The final variation is similar to the first variation in that it uses lots of ornaments. The key difference is that these ornaments are often large leaps away from the notes in the tune. As a result, the major challenge of this variation is to make large melodic leaps quickly and cleanly. It is also the fastest variation and maintains that speed for a long period of time, so it requires large amounts of endurance from the player. This variation ends with an accelerando and an impressive display of range to end the work with the highest and fastest melodic line of the entire piece.

Concerto for Tuba

Cleveland, Ohio—the home of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame—was the birthplace of Eric Ewazen, but despite growing up in the rock and roll capital of the world, his path led to Juilliard and a career as a classical composer. Over the course of his career he studied with many accomplished musicians, such as Samuel Adler and Milton Babbitt. Although Ewazen composes for just about every instrument in existence, he is most well known for his expertise in compositions for brass instruments. His compositional style tends to be tonal and pastoral-sounding, making it easily accessible to a large variety of listeners.

Ewazen's *Concerto for Tuba* was written in 1994 for one of his students, to be performed in a solo competition at Juilliard. The piece was published a few years later as a solo work for either bass trombone or tuba. This piece presents very different challenges depending on which instrument is used. In the tuba version, the piece spends lots of time in a very high register of the instrument, even while requiring the player to perform difficult technical passages.

It has become standard practice when writing a concerto to compose the first movement in sonata form; this form includes an exposition, a development section, and a recapitulation of the opening material. The first movement begins with a slow and beautiful introduction, but quickly arrives at the first of two main themes, an exciting detached melody that spans a large section of the tuba's range. Next is the second theme, which has a much smoother sound, and mixes simple and compound rhythms using triplets. Once we get through the two themes, we will hear some closing material that consists of short flourishes throughout a large portion of the tuba's range; this leads us into the development section. In this section, Ewazen takes his two themes from the introduction and "develops" them, shifting and "morphing" them until they only slightly resemble the melodies on which they are based. After the development comes to a close, in a very similar way to the close of the introduction, the recapitulation restates the first main theme in the tonic key and ends on a jump of over two octaves.

The second of the three movements is somber and is much slower than the first movement, keeping mostly to minor keys rather than the major keys of the first movement. This movement is in ternary (ABA) form. The A section of the movement consists of longer note values and gives an impression of longing. The second section is in the same tempo as the A section, but its use of shorter note values makes it sound faster. This section still has a sense of yearning sadness, but the quicker melodic movement makes it feel more upbeat than the A section. The movement concludes with a restatement of the A section, ending the movement right where it started.

The third movement is rather jarring, and is by far the most technically difficult movement to perform. Unlike the first two movements, the third movement moves away from Ewazen's expected tonality; it makes heavy use of atypical scales, causing it to sound much more dissonant than the rest of the piece. This piece is full of nonstandard meters, with uneven note groupings such as sets of five or seven notes.

This creates an uncomfortable feeling of unevenness throughout much of the piece. On top of the difficult rhythms, this piece is very fast, and is written almost exclusively in the topmost part of the tuba's range. These elements make this movement very exciting to listen to and to play.

Suite for Unaccompanied Cello

Johann Sebastian Bach is one of the most well-known composers of all time, but he never had a chance to write for the tuba since it would not be invented until nearly a hundred years after his death. Bach was born in 1685, and was orphaned at the age of ten when both of his parents died within eight months of each other. Bach worked and composed all throughout Germany where he held many different positions. He composed his cello suites while he was living in Cöthen from 1717-1723, where he was the director of music for Prince Leopold. Bach was especially productive in his compositions for keyboard violin and cello during this time. This was likely due to the fact that Leopold was proficient on these instruments and encouraged Bach to write things that Leopold would be able to perform.

Bach's *Cello Suites* are some of the most recognizable solo works ever written. They appear regularly in movies, television, and commercials. A suite is a multi-movement work that is made up of dances, all in the same key and usually preceded by a prelude. Bach's cello suites consist of six movements: an introduction followed by five dance movements. Because of the popularity of the suites, they have been arranged for just about every instrument that has even the slightest ability to perform them. When adapting them to be performed by brass instruments, there are several problems that become obvious very quickly and must be addressed. A cello player never runs out of air when playing, and as a result, cello compositions often do not leave places in the music to take breaths. Second, a cello has the ability to play multiple notes at one time; brass instruments do not. The final problem is range. Not all instruments, the tuba included, have a comparable range to the cello.

During Bach's life, different dances had different characteristics. A sarabande is incredibly slow and stately, to the point that it sounds much more like a processional than a dance. Bach's sarabande, in particular, when played on the tuba, may sound much less recognizable than most of the dances from these suites. This is because the original contained a large amount of double stops (multiple notes played at the same time). This adaptation for the tuba uses grace notes to simulate the double stops. Although grace notes do sound quite a bit different than what Bach wrote, the beauty and character of his sarabande still shine through in this arrangement.

A bourrée is a dance of French origin that is quick and is usually danced in double time. Unlike the sarabande, this dance contains extremely few cello-specific techniques. As a result, there are very few changes that must be made in order for it to be performable on the tuba. Nevertheless, this dance challenges the performer to play with accurate, clean articulations while maintaining a smooth line. The bourrée also contains large melodic leaps that are not very difficult on a string instrument, but present a formidable challenge when played on a brass instrument.

Sonata for Tuba and Piano

Thomas Beversdorf may have a funny name, but he composed some very heavy-hitting low brass repertory. Like many composers, Beversdorf did not make his living solely from composition. He was primarily a teacher of trombone for most of his life, but also played professionally in the Rochester Philharmonic, the Houston Symphony, and the Pittsburgh Symphony.

Unlike all of the other pieces in this program, the *Sonata for Tuba and Piano* is not a work that showcases the solo tuba while keeping the piano accompaniment in the background. Instead, both the tuba and the piano play equally important roles in this piece, and, if anything, the piano score may be the more difficult of the two parts (sorry, Paul!).

At a glance, this piece seems much easier to play than comparable solo literature, but the deeper we get into the piece the more challenging it becomes. The first movement is fast, and—like the first movement of the Ewazen Concerto—it is in sonata form. Beversdorf's first theme is very fast with strongly accented attacks, which together create a driving feel. The second theme is flowing and smooth, and though it is not any slower than the first theme, its lyrical character gives the impression of a slower tempo. During the development, Beversdorf uses interplay between the tuba and piano to vary the two themes presented in the exposition. After the development we return to the first main theme. After the first theme, a typical sonata form would then bring back the second theme as well; Ewazen breaks tradition here and simply ends the piece.

The second movement of the piece is a slow movement that starts off somberly but slowly becomes more hectic, yet eventually returns to its original simpler feel. This Allegretto starts off with the first statement of a melody in the tuba, and then continues with a call-and-response based on that melody between the tuba and piano. The two voices do not actually play at the same time during the opening statement of the main theme. Once the two voices do enter together, the tune starts to become more and more complex. This slow evolution of the melody resembles a theme-and-variation form, though it is not as clear-cut and simple as *The Carnival of Venice*.

In the third movement, the tempo ramps back up again to provide a fast and spirited feel. Throughout this movement, there is a constant stream of running eighth notes, in a bouncy compound meter. This meter has traditionally indicated galloping horses; whether or not this is what the composer wanted to imply, it is a fitting image while listening to this piece.

The Carnival of Venice

Jean-Baptiste Arban included *The Carnival of Venice* as the final work in his comprehensive study for trumpet (1864). This placement implies that Arban expected a player to have mastered every technique possible in order to play this piece. As we might expect, it is not an easy piece to play on trumpet—and it is even harder to play on the tuba. Arban's method book is one of the most widely used exercise books for the trumpet, and has also been adapted for use by trombone, euphonium, and tuba. Arban was revolutionary in developing technique for the trumpet and cornet during the 1800s.