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Senior Recital

Adam Zahller Brown
Chapman University

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Senior Recital:

Adam Zahller Brown

Composer, Tenor, Pianist

Salmon Recital Hall,
Chapman University
10 April 2011
5pm

I. *Pianist*

Prelude and Fugue in C sharp Major,
from The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book One
BWV 848

J.S. Bach (1685-1750)

Impromptu in G flat Major
op. 90 no. 3

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Sonata in B Minor
op. 1 no. 1

Alban Berg (1885-1935)

Adam Zahller Brown, Piano

II. *Tenor*

Canticle V: The Death of Saint Narcissus

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)
text by T. S. Eliot

Adam Zahller Brown, Tenor
Alexandra Perdew*, Harp

Intermission

III. *Composer*

Cinderblock and Empty Sky

Adam Zahller (b. 1988)

Theresa Silveyra, Piano

No Quiet Place

Adam Zahller (b. 1988)

Maria Myrick, Violin
Emily Uematsu, Violin
Jarrett Threadgill, Viola
Jake Weins, Violoncello

Heretic Forms**

Adam Zahller (b. 1988)

Matthew Boring*, Trumpet
Eileen Regullano, Piano

Note: No photography or videography is to be allowed during the recital.

*Guest Artist (Not Chapman University Student)

**West Coast Premiere

Program Notes¹ *by Adam Zahller Brown*

The name **Johann Sebastian Bach**, fairly obscure during the composer's life, is now nearly synonymous with Baroque contrapuntal mastery. The works of J. S. Bach encapsulate better than those of any other composer the fundamental procedures of tonal counterpoint. His formal and technical virtuosity are matched with an innate sense of beauty and artistry, allowing him to create music that is, while clearly of its time, somehow inherently timeless. The **Prelude and Fugue in C sharp major BWV 848** is one of the breeziest and most lighthearted selections from the Well-Tempered Clavier. Just as the other pieces from this two-part keyboard masterwork, it evidences Bach's ability to create, through organic processes, works of complexity and supreme expression from highly economic materials.

Early Romantic master **Franz Schubert** managed over the course of his relatively short life of 31 years to create major works in nearly every genre. Perhaps most famous are his songs and symphonies. But not far behind are his works for solo piano, which seem to synthesize the intimacy and melodic brilliance of his songs with the expansive quality and expressive breadth of his symphonic works. The **Impromptu in G flat major op. 90 no. 3**, written just a year before the composer's death, is a deceptively austere work; its charming and relatively simple cantabile main theme, singularity of texture, and overall song-like quality mask deeper formal and motivic processes.

Alban Berg, another short-lived Viennese composer, is, in his singular creative genius, exceedingly difficult to classify. Berg was certainly a man of his time—and his time was one of great aesthetic shifts. Therefore his music sits at the point of convergence between musical trends. On one hand, his work oozes with the drama, lyricism, and personal expression of late German Romanticism (Mahler, Bruckner, et al). But equally important to the music of Berg, a student of Schoenberg, is the formalism of the so-called "Second Viennese School," including twelve-tone theory. The **Piano Sonata op.1** is the culmination of Berg's early studies with Schoenberg. The piece predates 12-tone theory, and is only tangentially related to Schoenberg's early "free atonal" works. Although densely chromatic, full of ingenious contrapuntal twists and turns, the work is actually in b minor. Its dense, formalistic exterior is merely housing for its deep-seated romantic spirit.

Widely considered to be the first great native British master to follow Henry Purcell, **Benjamin Britten** composed some of the most highly and widely regarded works of the 20th century, all in his somewhat conservative yet highly personal musical idiom. Britten focused largely on vocal music, due in part to the inspiration he drew from his partner, tenor Peter Pears, for whom he wrote the bulk of his works. Britten is undoubtedly one of the great 20th century composers of opera, but he also produced a great deal of songs and chamber works including voice. The **Canticles** are a set of such pieces written one at a time over the course of the composer's life, all with Peter Pears' distinctive voice in

¹ It is suggested that you actually *read* these notes—they will help. However, please refrain from shuffling papers during the performance.

mind. These works are for varying ensembles, and all set religious texts or texts with religious connotations.

Canticle V: The Death of Saint Narcissus, for tenor and harp, is the final work in the series, written in 1974. The text is an early poem by T. S. Eliot published in an anthology of early and abandoned works by the British poet. Eliot himself never intended the poem to be made public in its totality, although he did mine it for material to use in other works, notably *The Waste Land*. The text deals with a character who melds Ovid's prototypic narcissist with episodes from the lives of several saints, including St. Augustine's rejection of Carthage, St. Sebastian's martyrdom by bow and arrow, and the desert seclusion of St. Narcissus (not to be confused with the Ovidian character). The poem blurs lines between earthly, perhaps even erotic, self-absorption with the divine selflessness of sainthood.

Text is included with this program as a separate, loose page.

Adam Zahller (Brown) is a midwestern-born composer currently based in Southern California, where he is completing a B.M. in composition at Chapman University. He is a student of Dr. Jeffrey Holmes. His works balance complex formal ideas with deep self-reflection, wrought within an ever-evolving yet distinctive personal musical language. His works have enjoyed premieres by pianist Daniela Mineva, the Chapman University New Music Ensemble, and readings by ensemble GREEN and the Penderecki Quartet. Mr. Zahller will begin graduate studies in the Fall at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, studying with composer James Dillon.

Cinderblock and Empty Sky (2009), for solo piano, derives its form from the scientific principle of entropy, the second law of thermodynamics. This law basically states that the amount of chaos in a system will increase over time, due to expenditure of energy. Reflecting this concept, the arc of "Cinderblock and Empty Sky" moves from extreme high energy to extreme low energy. The intent is not, however, to translate a scientific concept into music in a literal, formalistic way. Rather, the piece is an exploration of how entropy exists in the individual, extrapolating the concept into the emotional realm.

No Quiet Place (2010), for string quartet, is, among other things, one of the composer's first forays into larger scale form. Although performed as a continuous whole, the piece consists of three major sections: an expansive and fairly static middle section framed by shorter, much more active sections. Within this framework, horizontal becomes vertical, foreground becomes background, and quiet is sought (but never quite found).

Heretic Forms (2011): The English word "heretic" comes from the Greek words *hairetos* (able to choose) and *hairesis* (the act of choosing). The title refers to the musical materials used, namely the natural microtones that the trumpet has the "choice" to access, in contrast to the piano, which, by nature of its tuning, is essentially "locked" into equal-temperament. But it also hints at the heretic tendencies of the human spirit (which can be either embraced or suppressed), among other things...

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks are in order to the many people without whose knowledge, wisdom, support, time, energy, and love today's recital would never have happened, and further, without whom I would not be the artist and person I now am. Some of the most important among these are:

Jeffrey Holmes, my composition teacher
Karen Knecht, my piano teacher
Patrick Goeser, my voice teacher

All of the performers who agreed to tackle my music—with special thanks to Matthew Boring, who flew all the way out from Nebraska just to premiere my piece

My mother, Dr. Rebecca Brown, and brothers Daniel and Benjamin

Robert Becker and Louise Thomas, for coaching student performers for this recital, and for being advocates to student composers at Chapman

Alexandra Perdew, who learned the incredibly difficult Britten in short order

Nathan Campbell and Keryn Wouden for turning pages

Sean Heim
Shaun Naidoo
Vera Ivanova
Amy Graziano
Judy Long
Peter Westenhofer
Rick Christopherson
Daniel Wachs
Stephen Coker

My many friends and colleagues at Chapman and elsewhere

Those whom I inevitably forgot to add

Finally, this entire recital is dedicated to the memory of F. Marshall Zahller, M.D., my grandfather, who has been one of the strongest and earliest advocates of my pursuits in music.

And, thank you for being here.