BETTY RUTH TOMFOHRDE, piano

Sunday, October 17, 1976
8:30 p.m.
Hamman Hall

RICE UNIVERSITY
the Shepherd School of Music
Samuel Jones, Dean
PROGRAM

Tape I
Sonata in F Major, K. 332
  Allegro
  Adagio
  Allegro assai

Mazurka, Op. 17, No. 4
Preludes, Op. 28, Nos. 1, 4, 9, 17, 21, 22, 24

Variations Sérieuses, Op. 54

Intermission
Sonatine
  Modéré
  Mouvement de Menuet
  Animé

Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm
  No. 1
  No. 2
  No. 4

Danzas Argentinas
  Danza del viejo boyero
  Danza de la moza donosa
  Danza del gaucho matrero

Tape II

This evening's concert is a cooperative effort between the Association of Rice Alumni and The Shepherd School of Music. Following the concert the Association of Rice Alumni cordially invites all members of the audience to a reception in the lobby honoring Mrs. Tomfohrde.

NOTES

Sonata in F major, K. 332

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Sonata in F major, K. 332, composed in Paris in 1778, displays the subtle influence of the traditional pastoral connotations of the key of F major. This is particularly evident in the first movement with its limpid, almost naïve themes and the imitation horn calls in the first subject. Occasional eruptions of tension created by brief forays into minor key areas provide some degree of contrast but do not disrupt the basically placid character of the movement.

The second movement is equally uncomplicated, consisting of a highly ornamented aria with accompanying Alberti bass. The melody is especially lovely and spiced with frequently poignant chromatic twists, some of which also affect the harmony. This aria would be easily imaginable in a transcription for either flute or oboe and piano.

The Finale is very quick and energetic with its flourishes of sixteenth notes, but even these fall into sequential patterns which convey a certain sense of simplicity. This movement, like the first, is in sonata form, and surprisingly, the development is more extensive than the abbreviated development section of the opening movement. But despite a heavy dose of minor tonalities, the rapid tempo and thin texture enable the development to
flow easily into the recapitulation which closes the movement in the spirit of airy, almost carefree lightness with which it had begun.

Mazurka, Op. 17 and Preludes, Op. 28

Frédéric Chopin

Of all Chopin’s piano works, the Mazurkas and Preludes are the most original and the best. The Mazurkas are based on a Polish national dance of that name, while the preludes are a collection of twenty-four short pieces arranged in a key cycle presenting the major and relative minor pairs moving completely around the circle of fifths. The Opus 17 Mazurkas date from 1832-1833 and the Preludes from 1838-1839. From the Preludes Ms. Tomkohde has selected a varied group in different textures and tempos, climaxing with the heavy, agitated Prelude in G minor followed by the virtuoso D minor prelude, which is actually in the Dorian mode.

Variations Sérieuses, Op. 54

Felix Mendelssohn

Mendelssohn’s Variations Sérieuses, written in 1841, is his only important work in this genre. The title itself seeks to distinguish this composition from the brilliant but facile variations on opera tunes and other themes which were abundant in the first half of the nineteenth century and have since receded into a well-deserved oblivion. Mendelssohn’s theme is no tune at all, but a series of suspensions and appoggiaturas cast in a somber D minor. The first eight bars consist almost exclusively of downward resolutions of the dissonant notes, while the consequent eight bars resolve each of their four phrases upward by a half step.

Upon this short theme Mendelssohn builds a series of seventeen variations plus a presto coda. Several of the variations are run together without a break, and in some instances one variation is simply a continuation of the same texture and figuration as the preceding one. As a result, the work unfolds with unusual continuity. Also contributing to this continuity are the progressions toward several judiciously spaced climaxes with important interludes coming in the tenth and eleventh variations and in variation fourteen. At the outset the theme is clearly audible, but it gradually withdraws into the background, though its presence is always discernible. While not a lengthy composition, the Variations Sérieuses will impress as a major work compacted into a relatively short span of time.

Sonatine

Maurice Ravel

Ravel’s Sonatine, completed in 1905, illustrates the composer’s predilection for classical forms which emerge with clarity despite the brilliance of the keyboard writing and the ambiguity of the harmony. The first movement is in a compact sonata form, complete with development. The opening theme is the most significant, for in various transformations it serves as thematic material for the other movements as well.

The second movement is in the tempo and style of a minuet, beginning with a partially inverted form of the first theme of the first movement. As in the classical minuet, the structure is binary with a shorter first section and elongated second section based on the same material and returning to the opening theme for its own conclusion.

The third movement is another sonata form with an extended development, based again on the initial first movement theme. The first subject here inverts the opening interval of that theme while the second subject is the theme itself. This last movement is a brilliant virtuoso piece, but is nonetheless restrained in comparison with Ravel’s other virtuoso works for the piano in keeping with the compact sonatine concept.
Notes (Continued)

Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm
Béla Bartók

The Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm from which the three on the program have been selected are found in the sixth and last book of the Mikrokosmos (1939), Bartók's series of progressive piano pieces leading from the earliest pianistic stages to the advanced. The impact on Bartók's music of Slovakian, Hungarian, Roumanian, Bulgarian and Serbo-Croatian folk music is inestimable. In these dances he has employed Bulgarian rhythms which subdivide the bar into groupings of $4 + 3$ eighth notes in the first piece, $2 + 2 + 3$ in the second piece and $3 + 2 + 3$ in Dance no. 4. The melodic and harmonic color of the dances are based on a variety of irregular modal scales which are frequently combined to produce wonderfully biting clashes of conflicting pitches.

Danzas Argentinas
Alberto Ginastera

Alberto Ginastera was born in Buenos Aires in 1916. Graduated from the Argentine National Conservatory of Music in 1938, he came to the United States on a Guggenheim Fellowship during 1946-1947. In 1953 he was named professor at the National Conservatory.

These three Argentine Dances are all in 6/8 meter and exploit bitonality and syncopated accents in one way or another. The first dance sets a dissonant triad against the linear motion of the left hand. The second follows a similar pattern with single melody notes, fourths, fifths and dissonant four-note chords against the left-hand motion. The last dance, marked Furiosamente ritmico e energico, is a perpetual motion piece, characterized by an even wider range of single notes, dissonant intervals and chords, thirds and consonant triads in the right hand over the continually moving bass. The climax, coming at the very conclusion, is appropriately indicated ffff and salvaggio.

Program notes by Jeffrey Kurtzman - (Dr. Kurtzman is assistant professor of music at The Shepherd School of Music, Rice University.)

BETTY RUTH TOMFOHRDE began her early piano studies with Miss Ruth Burr of Houston. She attended Rice University for two years, then was awarded a fellowship at the Juilliard Graduate School where she studied with Ernest Hutcheson. After graduating from Juilliard, Mrs. Tomfohrde studied at Fontainebleau, France, with Robert Casadesus.

Mrs. Tomfohrde helped found the J. S. Bach Society of Houston and is well-known in the Houston area as a solo recitalist, accompanist for singers and instrumentalists, and as a pianist in chamber music performance. In addition she has performed professionally in New York City; The Hague, Netherlands; Seattle, Washington; and Saint Louis. Mrs. Tomfohrde has recently joined the faculty of the School of Music at the University of Houston.

Her Husband, John Tomfohrde, a graduate of Rice, is a chemical engineer with Shell Oil Company.

The next concert in The Shepherd School of Music Chamber Music Series will be performed by Lady Evelyn Barbirolli, oboe, assisted by Anne Schnoebelen, harpsichord, and the Shepherd Quartet, on Wednesday, October 20, 1976, in Hamman Hall at 8:30 p.m.