



McGill



Schulich School of Music
École de musique Schulich

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Le vendredi 31 mars 2017
à 17h

Friday, March 31, 2017
5:00 p.m.

Récital de maîtrise

Master's Recital

Masashi Usui

saxophone jazz / jazz saxophone

classe d' / class of
Allan McLean

Chad Linsley, piano
Adrian Vedady, basse / bass
Andre White, batterie / drums

I'm with You

Masashi Usui
(né en / b. 1980)

Triones

M. Usui

Midnight in Montreal

M. Usui

Audrey's Holiday

M. Usui

My Innocent Grandfather

M. Usui

Mondegreen

M. Usui

Which Side Are You On?

M. Usui

Ce concert fait partie des épreuves imposées à Masashi Usui pour l'obtention d'une Maîtrise en musique en interprétation.
This recital is presented by Masashi Usui in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music Performance.

Date du récital/Date of recital : Friday, March 31, 2017. 5:00 p.m.

Nom/Name: Masashi Usui

Classe de/Class of: Allan McLean

Dear Guests,

Welcome to my master's recital. It is my great pleasure to be here with you today. I am honored to present to you my original compositions. Although they are modern pieces, I composed them with the jazz traditions of swing and blues in mind. I believe music and sound transcend race, language, culture and nationality—like a prayer expressing a universal message. I hope the music my fellow musicians and I will offer you today will uplift and transport you, and we will all have a fantastic time.

Enjoy!

Masashi Usui

Special Thanks

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Al McLean for his support and friendship. I also want to thank my great fellow musicians: Chad Linsley, Adrian Vedady, and André White. I want to offer my heartfelt thanks to my mentors Masato Kumoi, Fukushi Tainaka, and Wataru Hamasaki, for sharing their knowledge and dedication and making me into the saxophonist I am today. Finally, I wish to thank my family for all their support over the years. Truly, I would not be here without them.

Program Notes

I've always wondered, *What kind of music has the power to resonate deep within people's minds? What makes a sound a really good sound?* When I was fifteen years old, I went to a concert by the great trumpeter Mr. Bobby Shew, and he asked the audience these questions. He also said, with great feeling, Music is prayer. The concert—his music and sound—was so fantastic. The rest of the audience and I were impressed not only by his amazing musicianship, but his heartfelt words as well. My experience that day prompted me to explore music further and strengthened my desire to become a professional musician.

"I'm with You" is a ballad I wrote to cheer myself up, along with my family. Living in Montreal has meant that I have lived far away from my family for three years. I have sometimes felt indescribable loneliness, and my family surely has as well. I always say, "I'm with you," to encourage myself when I felt alone. And so, with this song, I wanted to say to my family that while life is not easy, I am okay, and wherever I happen to be, I am with them.

"Triones," also known as "The Big Dipper", is a bebop blues song inspired by the music of Charlie Parker. As an originator of bebop, Parker innovated harmonic ideas such as passing chords, altered chords, and chord substitutions. Even though he accomplished these innovations over seventy years ago, his music still feels amazingly fresh. Blues is essential to jazz music, expressing sadness and lamentation. I mixed Parker's ideas with the blues to compose "Triones", and it has some complex chord changes and melodies. Despite the sorrow you might normally feel from the blues, this particular piece may also bring you happiness and joy. One might say that "Triones" is a *happy* blues.

"Midnight in Montreal" features the contrabass and is a minor medium swing tune. This piece evokes the tranquil, mysterious atmosphere of midnight in Montreal via the sound of the contrabass. One night, on my way home from a jam session at around three in the morning, some nice swinging melodies suddenly came to me. There was no one in the streets at the time, and the quiet spring night spoke to me. Once home, I immediately started writing and ended up with this piece. I wish I could always write tunes this way, but unfortunately, things don't always work out so perfectly...

"Audrey's Holiday" is the first memorable tune I ever wrote. I composed it quickly, and luckily the tune went well. This piece is a Latin song inspired by the 1953 American film *Roman Holiday*. I admire Audrey Hepburn as a great actress and humanitarian, and I hope she is looking down on us now from heaven. Please note the lyrical, passionate solos by the piano and drums.

"My Innocent Grandfather" is written for my grandfather, Hisao, and is a jazz waltz. This piece evokes the idyllic landscape of rural Japan. My grandfather was born and raised in the countryside. He liked to talk about his favorite childhood memories while drinking.

Though elderly, he looked like a sprightly youngster as he did. I wish I could drink and talk with him again.

“**Mondegreen**” is a ballad featuring piano and contrabass. According to the Oxford English Dictionary Online, “*Mondegreen means a misunderstood or misinterpreted word or phrase resulting from a mishearing, especially of the lyrics to a song*” (Shibboleth). Even if we speak the same language, it’s sometimes difficult to understand and get along with each other. And if our languages are different, it’s that much harder to grasp the details. I am not a native speaker of English, and I often experience the difficulties of miscommunication living here in a foreign country. Nonetheless, I strongly believe that we have ways to communicate what’s on our minds. Our conversations can take the form of music.

“**Which Side Are You On?**” is a fast swing tune inspired by the music of Joe Henderson and Wayne Shorter. They were both great tenor saxophonists and composers, and they accelerated the innovation of contemporary jazz in the 1960s. I went through periods of listening to them voraciously, transcribing their music, and it was during one of those times that I wrote this tune. The piece has three sections: the first is calm, dark and enigmatic, but possessing dynamism as well; the second has a pleasant swing feel and harmonies like a clear blue sky; and the third is aggressive and short. The piece builds to a drum solo at its climax.

Works Cited

"Shibboleth Authentication Request." Shibboleth Authentication Request. N.p., n.d. Web. 09 Feb. 2017.
<<http://www.oed.com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/view/Entry/251801?redirectedFrom=mondegreen#eid>>.