Ursula Oppens

Pianist

Thursday, April 11, 1985
8:15 p.m.
Wait Chapel Auditorium

WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY
PROGRAM

MIDDLE PASSAGE (1983) ........................................ Anthony DAVIS

DAVIDSBÜNDLERTÄNZE, Op. 6 ................................. SCHUMANN
1. Lebhaft
2. Innig
3. Mit Humor: Etwas hahnbüchen
4. Ungeduldig
5. Einfach
6. Sehr rasch und in sich hinein
7. Nicht schnell mit äusserst starker Empfindung
8. Frisch
9. Lebhaft (Hierauf schloss Florestan und es zuckte ihm schmerzlich um die Lippen)
10. Balladenmässig sehr rasch
11. Einfach
12. Mit Humor
13. Wild und lustig
14. Zart und singend
15. Frisch
16. Mit gutem Humor
17. Wie aus der Ferne
18. Nicht Schnell (Ganz zum Überfluss meinte Eusebius noch Folgendes; dabei sprach aber viel Seligkeit aus seinen Augen.)

—INTERMISSION—

NIGHT FANTASIES (1980) ........................................ Elliott CARTER
LYON (from “Album d’un Voyageur”) ............................ LISZT
LES CLOCHES DE GENÈVE (from “Années de Pelèrinage”) ............................ LISZT
MEPHISTO WALTZ .................................................. LISZT

Records: Arista, CBS Masterworks, CRI, Nonesuch, Vanguard, Watt Works

COLBERT ARTISTS MANAGEMENT, INC.
111 West 57th Street
New York, New York 10019
MIDDLE PASSAGE (1983) ........................................ Anthony DAVIS

Anthony Davis is a graduate of Yale University, and has been active in numerous public service projects. He was a lecturer in Music and Afro-American Studies at Yale University, and now resides in New York City. His music includes orchestral compositions, commissioned by the Houston Symphony and the Brooklyn Philharmonic, and several film scores. He has also recently written music for the Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis, the Molissa Fenley Dance Company (for the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave series), the Kitchen and the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati.

Of “Middle Passage,” he prefers to say only that it was written for the poet Robert Hayden—its title refers to Hayden's poem of the same name—and is in one movement.

Anthony Davis' music has been recorded by numerous companies—India Navigation, Sackville, Red Records, Moers Music, Gramavision, and MPS.

Joel Sachs
“Night Fantasies” was jointly commissioned through a grant from the American Music Center by four distinguished New York pianists—Ursula Oppens, Paul Jacobs, Gilbert Kalish and Charles Rosen—and Carter’s starting point was the idea of reflecting their contrasting personalities in the music itself after the 19th century precedent of such suites of character as “Kreisleriana.” But if “Fantasiestücke” suggested his title, there is nothing suite-like in form or Schumannesque in idiom about the score that finally emerged; its contrasts of character being cross-cut in a continuous 22-minute span, a kind of fantastical nocturne “suggesting the fleeting thoughts and feelings that pass through the mind during a period of wakefulness at night,” as Carter has described it.

The piece begins with, and intermittently returns to, a remote, still “night music” out of which the “fleeting thoughts and feelings” erupt in an unpredictable flux of flashing figuration, booming chords and angular declamations. But where the night music is based upon a single chord of all 12 notes spread across the keyboard, the episodes are strongly contrasted in harmonic character: one passage may be dominated by chords made up of thirds and sixths, another may feature fourths and fifths and still another, seconds and sevenths while the “non-invertible” tritone is dramatically reserved for a stubborn “recitativo corderico” marking the centre of the work. In the last pages the music rises to a climax of grinding grandeur before “dropping off” with almost ironic casualness at the end.

If one had to single out Carter’s most characteristic gift, it would surely be the sheer power of invention which has unfailingly carried him through the grandest structures with a momentum and purposefulness equal to any composer this century. Because he has approached the renewal of the musical language from the “large scale” end rather than from the morphological constructivism of most of the official post-war avant-garde, because he has conspicuously steered clear of successive musical fashions statistical and mystical, and because his music still enshrines a certain pioneering spirit in the tradition of Ives—though emphatically not an Ivesian roughness of technique—Carter tends at present to be categorised as something of a lonely individualist. Yet within a few decades it may well be that his oeuvre and the manifold new possibilities it has opened up will be considered more central to the developing tradition of Western music than many a current collective effort to map and influence its course. In the meantime it is enough that he is composing as vitally as ever.

Bayan Northcott
The amazing versatility of pianist Ursula Oppens, as reflected in the unique range of her repertoire, has become widely recognized as a major thrust in her multifaceted career.

During the 1984/85 season Miss Oppens appears both with orchestra and in recital at many cities and universities across the United States with her schedule including performances with the Cincinnati Symphony and a recital at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

In Europe this season Ursula Oppens makes her solo recital debut in London at Queen Elizabeth Hall in addition to performances with orchestra in Glasgow and Edinburgh and recitals in Scotland, France and Germany.

In addition to appearing with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, this past summer Ursula Oppens participated in the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival for her third consecutive year. During the 1983/84 season Miss Oppens' schedule included performances with the San Francisco Symphony, the Boston Symphony Orchestra (her third appearance since 1982), the Milwaukee and Long Beach Symphonies and the Musica Aeterna Orchestra at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art in works ranging from Mozart and Beethoven to Elliott Carter.

Highlights of recent seasons have included her appearance with the New York Philharmonic in the New York premiere of John Adams' "Grand Pianola Music," recitals at the Kennedy Center, Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Library of Congress and engagements with the St. Louis, Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Milwaukee, and San Francisco Symphonies, the Los Angeles and Buffalo Philharmonics, and the Los Angeles and St. Paul Chamber Orchestras. She has toured in Europe, Japan, Mexico and Central America and has played at the Tanglewood, Dartmouth, Santa Fe, Aspen, Bonn, Stresa and Bath music festivals, the latter in the summer of 1980 when she performed the world premiere of Elliott Carter's "Night Fantasies."

Born into a musical family, Oppens received a well-rounded education, studying economics and English literature at Radcliffe College before deciding to become a musician. In addition to her continued training with Edith Oppens (her mother), she took her master's degree at the Juilliard School studying piano with Rosina Lhevinne, Leonard Shure, Guido Agosti and chamber music with Felix Galimir. Under the auspices of Young Concert Artists, she made her New York debut in 1969. With the award of first prize at the 1969 Busoni International Piano Competition, she started on a route which was to include many such honors. Winning the 1976 Avery Fisher Prize resulted in Oppens' performance with the New York Philharmonic; this was so successful that she was reengaged for another concert with the Philharmonic in 1978. In addition, she was the recipient of the 1970 Diploma d'honneur of the Accademia Chigiana and the 1979 Record World Award for her recording of Frederic Rzewski's "The People United Will Never Be Defeated."

Ursula Oppens' latest release, a recording of two-piano works by Busoni, Beethoven and Mozart with the late Paul Jacobs on the Nonesuch label, was the "Critics' Choice" in the August 1984 issue of High Fidelity Magazine. Soon to be released by Angel Records is her recording of John Adams' "Grand Pianola Music," with pianist Alan Feinburg and Solisti New York. The art of Ursula Oppens can also be heard on the Arista, CBS Masterworks, CRI, Vanguard and Watt Works labels.

Recording devices and flash photography expressly forbidden.

Ushers courtesy of Alpha Phi Omega Fraternity.