

Musica Viva!



Toward the Light—Marilyn Banner

Saturday, Sept. 19, 2015

8:00 PM

7502 Flower Avenue

Takoma Park

<http://www.dcmusicaviva.org>

PROGRAM

Robert Schumann (June 8, 1810 – July 29, 1856)

Waldszenen, Op. 82 (1849)

Entry
Hunters on the Lookout
Lonely Flowers
Haunted Place
Friendly Landscape
Wayside Inn
Bird as Prophet
Hunting Song
Farewell

Viktor Ullmann (Jan. 1, 1898–October 18, 1944)

Sonata No. 7 (Terezin, 1944)

I. Allegro, gemächliche Halbe
II. All marcia, ben misurato
III. Adagio, ma non troppo
IV. Scherzo. Allegretto grazioso - Trio - Scherzo
V. Thema, Variationen und Fugue über in
hebräisches Volkslied

Carl Banner, Piano

Program Notes

Schumann; Waldszenen (Forest Scenes), Op. 82, consists of nine short pieces similar in style and spirit to the composer's Kinderszenen (1838). "Eintritt" (Entry) features unusual, asymmetrical phrasing. "Jäger auf der Lauer" (Hunters on the Lookout) is an exciting, technically challenging piece in the cast of a typical nineteenth century hunting song. The difficulties of "Einsame Blumen" (Lonely Flowers) lie in maintaining balance between the two distinct voices in the right hand; otherwise, it is simple and melodic. "Verrufene Stelle" (Haunted Place) evokes an air of eerie mystery with passages in slow dotted rhythms, while the fast, tricky triplets of "Freundliche Landschaft" (Friendly Landscape) create a surprisingly poetic effect. "Herberge" (Wayside Inn) presents a variety of material that requires great sensitivity to balance.



The best-known and most striking piece of the set is "Vogel als Prophet" (Bird as Prophet); its cross-relations, incomplete melodies, and extreme delicacy of texture create a weirdly beautiful atmosphere. "Jagdlied" (Hunting Song) is the second of the Waldszenen in this style and the example more typical of the genre. Rapidly repeated triplet chords both lend the piece rhythmic drive and pose a substantial technical challenge. The concluding "Abschied" (Farewell) is a touching song without words. The Waldszenen may rightly be regarded as Schumann's last really fine keyboard work. The decline in the composer's mental and emotional capacities in ensuing years led him to redirect his energies largely toward

the compilation and revision of earlier works rather than the production of new music. The set is dedicated to a young lady named Annette Preußner.

Ullman, Sonata #7; Next month will be the 59th anniversary of Ullmann's death in the gas chamber at Auschwitz. He was encircled for years by the rapidly closing noose of the Third Reich: a Silesian Jew threatened by the Nazis in Germany, he fled to Prague; after the Nazis took Prague, he was sent to Theresienstadt, located in the fortress city of Terezin, now part of the Czech Republic, a sort of publicity-stunt concentration camp designed to paper over the Holocaust with a sham façade of art and culture. He remained active as a composer throughout his incarceration at Theresienstadt, and the Seventh Sonata was written toward the end of his time there, just before his transfer to Auschwitz, and two days thereafter, his murder.



As a youth he studied with Schönberg, and he was fascinated by his era's most avant-garde musical techniques, even the brashest of the works presented here are never less than winning. Even as his circumstances became more brutal, his music became—if anything—lovelier, more polished and more playful.

It may be impossible, even ill-advised, to consider Ullmann's music outside of its historical context. The composer and the intended audience for his final works were under a collective death sentence. But it would do him

a disservice as an artist to view his music only through the window of his unforgivable end; it represents the music of an assured and exciting musical voice.

Adapted from a review by Daniel Stephen Johnson

The Artist

Carl Banner— Carl began his musical career at age 7, taking piano lessons with his aunt, a well-known DC piano teacher, chamber musician and dance accompanist. Her husband was a violist, and the couple held weekly chamber music performances in their DC home that young Carl often listened to (sometimes from under the piano). When his family relocated to St. Louis, he continued his lessons. In 1962, he performed the Schumann Piano Concerto with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. This achievement was, he reflects, 'a significant milestone for me in many ways.' He stayed in St. Louis to study for a year after his parents returned to DC. He joined his family the next year, but traveled by train twice a month to St. Louis for lessons.



After study at Yale, Washington University in St. Louis, the Music Academy of the West in California and SUNY Buffalo, he returned to DC in 1970. 'Around this time,' he says, 'I decided to give up music and get a real job of some sort.' Following a PhD in cell biology at Harvard, he worked at NIH. But he never completely abandoned music, and after returning to DC in 1982, he 'assembled groups of

very good amateurs,' among them the NIH Chamber Players and the Rock Creek Chamber Players, with whom he performed. Three years later, he formed the Millennium Ensemble and the Cezanne Trio and initiated a regular concert series at several area venues.

In 1988 Carl and his wife formed the nonprofit Washington Musica Viva, 'to bring the kind and quality of chamber music that I dreamed of to the public.' Banner feels he is 'bringing some new life to the form' of the piano recital. He credits his approach 'more to my chamber music experience and exposure to non-classical music than to my pedagogical training.' He has departed from the assumptions, traditions and expectations of solo piano repertoire in ways that none of my teachers would have countenanced ... perhaps I love the piano because it is the romantic instrument par excellence, and I am a 19th century romantic at heart,' he muses. 'I am more interested in depth than brilliance, in emotion than impression, in truth than illusion ... I encourage the audience to close their eyes and relax into their own emotional space.'

Marilyn Banner.

Marilyn Banner is the artist whose music-related paintings grace the cover of these programs each month. Spend a little time during intermission browsing her works on display in the music room, then see more on her web site at marilynbanner.com.



In addition to providing the visual diversion at her Flower Avenue studio, Marilyn also finds time to preside over the Board of Directors of Musica Viva, as well as the annual Takoma Park Art Walk.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Saturday October 17:

House Concert at the home of Capt. Richard White
6005 Milo Dr, Bethesda at 7:30 pm
Mozart Sonata in Bb K. 333
Brahms selected Intermezzi, Capriccios, Ballades
Andrew Stiller "The Water is Wide, Daisy Bell"

Saturday November 14:

Flower Avenue House Concert at 8:00 pm
Adnan Saygun - Anadolu' Dan Suite
Chopin - Two Nocturnes
Haydn - Sonata in F major, Hob. XVI:23
Scott Joplin - Three Rags

Washington Musica Viva produces high quality, unpretentious public performances of a broad range of classical, jazz-based, and contemporary chamber music. WMV began as a monthly multi-disciplinary performance series in the Kensington studio of visual artist Marilyn Banner. Now in our 15th season, WMV has produced more than 200 programs, including performances at the Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage, the Czech Center in NY, the Embassy of the Czech Republic, the Embassy of Austria, Busboys and Poets, Twins Jazz Club, and Brooklyn Conservatory. WMV is directed by pianist Carl Banner. Participants include professional musicians from Washington, Baltimore, New York, and elsewhere.

Washington Musica Viva, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization, and all contributions are fully tax deductible. WMV can be reached at 301-891-6844 or demusicaviva@verizon.net. Our mailing address is WMV, 7502 Flower Ave, Takoma Park, MD 20912.

Program notes and composer pictures from Wikipedia

