



Anthony Trionfo, *flutist*

Oberon's Grove

YCA Presents Flautist Anthony Trionfo



Above: Anthony Trionfo, photographed by Matt Dine

Wednesday March 28th, 2018 - **Young Concert Artists** presenting flautist Anthony Trionfo at Merkin Hall. **Mr. Trionfo is a musician of prodigious talent and scintillating personality;** along with the excellent pianist Albert Cano Smit and a quartet of string players, **he offered a wide-ranging, adventurous program combining the familiar, the rare, and the new.**

Gabriel Fauré's *Fantasy in E minor*, Op. 79, opened the evening. Mr. Trionfo's shining tone and his feel for the sensuous undercurrents of the opening *Andantino* gave way, in the *Allegro*, to florid passages of crystalline coloratura. Mr. Cano Smit was the ideal partner here, his playing impeccably tailored, his seriousness of intent and commitment most welcome in such a young artist.

Returning alone to the stage, **Mr. Trionfo gave a superbly confident performance of J.S. Bach's *Partita in A minor*, BWV 1013.** In this suite of dances, the flautist showed great subtlety and a multi-hued timbre that kept the music ever-alive. The *Courante* had a feel of birdsong, the *Sarabande* a forlorn air of touching simplicity. In the concluding *Bourrée anglaise*, the playing was light-filled and lovely.

The New York premiere of *drip/spin* by Katherine Balch, the 2017 YCA Composer-in-Residence, was prefaced by Mr. Trionfo's remarks about the 'dew-drop necklace' - silk threads and mucus droplets - with which the glow-worm attracts and entraps its prey. The perpetual motion of the piano part seems to envision the spinning toils of the glow-worm, whilst the sighs and blips from the flute depict the unsuspecting victim. Some of the piano keys have been 'prepared', adding a ghostly quality. The flute lingers on high, until an energy drain occurs. Then the piano begins a rolling motif; in its death throes, the preyed-upon flute goes wild, with harsh accents that finally sputter out.

For the *Chant de Linos* by André Jolivet, a string quartet comprised of Mélanie Genin (harp), Aleksey (continues)

Semenenko (violin), Ida Kavafian (viola) and Sang-Eun Lee (cello) joined Mr. Trionfo onstage. André Jolivet (1905-1974) composed this work on commission from the Paris Conservatoire in 1944 as a compulsory test piece for competitors in the *Solo de Concours*; the prize was won that year by Jean-Pierre Rampal. The work is a threnody (or lament to the dead) inspired by the story of Linos, son of Apollo. Linos taught Orpheus to play the lyre, and he was later killed by Heracles for criticizing him too much. André Jolivet was a composer inspired by the legends from antiquity; he wrote many chamber music works, eleven concertos, as well as orchestral and vocal music. The rich yet transparent textures of the strings are quite contemporary in sound yet they evoke a distant, mythic past. A dreamy passage for flute and harp draws us in; the music can veer from lyrical to explosive in the twinkling of an eye. A subtle flute solo leads to a darkish dance played by all. Things get a bit woozy before turning to lament; following a cadenza, the music dances onward with the flute trilling and piping. What a great idea to program this ensemble piece tonight: a wonderful opportunity to hear this music, and so beautifully played.

A fascinating performance of Lowell Liebermann's *Sonata for flute and piano*, Op. 23, followed the interval. The opening *Lento con rubato* soon wraps us in the strange beauty of its *misterioso* atmosphere. Delicate sounds from the piano's upper register are followed by a big outburst which subsides into ghostliness. Single notes stuck by the pianist underscore a sinuous flute motif; then the flute sound turns big and piercing. Rippling piano figurations summon the flautist back to song, a gentle flow becoming a percolation. The haunting melody returns in all its mystery, and Mr. Trionfo's flute makes a final ascent to a remarkably sustained note that tapers away.

In the ensuing *Presto energico*, there is much bouncy, lively coloratura from the flute which Mr. Trionfo conveyed brilliantly, with lots of body English; meanwhile the piano writing is animated...almost wild. The music sails forward, with virtuosic playing from Mr. Cano Smit whilst Mr. Trionfo spins high flourishes with his flute. This work drew a very warm audience response, with the composer taking a bow to waves of enthusiasm.

Ian Clark's *Zoom Tube* again gave Mr. Trionfo the opportunity to demonstrate some of the various sound effects his flute could produce...like the Balch, but more extroverted and pop-oriented. He sometimes seemed to be producing two different sounds at the same time, 'speaking' or blowing air, playfully jazzing things up, even emitting a whooping scream at one point.

Mr. Trionfo's arrangement of the traditional *Carnival of Venice* provided an immensely enjoyable showcase for his virtuosity. After a captivating trill, the flautist embarked on a series of variations on the familiar tune: the blues, *bel canto*, jazz, a Latin lilt, 'Casta diva', and on and on. Mr. Cano Smit was the perfect accomplice in this imaginative *tour de force* as the two players kept the audience thoroughly engaged with their technical dazzle and well-contrasted personalities.

As an encore, Mr. Trionfo offered Debussy's *Syrinx*, ending on a sustained, gossamer *pianissimo*.
~ Oberon

March 29, 2018 |

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