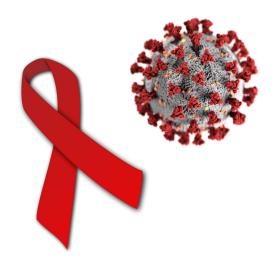
Flute Music for Remembrance and Healing: Uncovering the Commissioned Works of the National Flute Association's "AIDS Memorial Concert" Series

Presented by Vincenzo Volpe Sunday, March 26, 2023 1:00 PM

Introduction

- Global health crisis
 - COVID-19 happening now
 - AIDS height in 1990s, never ended
 - o Artistic response for both
- Robert Maggio's Phoenix for two flutes
 - Selected for my undergraduate recital in 2017
 - Dedication → Commissioned for the 1998 "AIDS Memorial Concert" of the National Flute Association
 - Concert organized by George Pope



Problem and Thesis

- NFA omits the "AIDS Memorial Concert" series and its commissioned works from the website archives
- Current music scholarship neglects instrumental music written in response to the AIDS crisis
- I argue that studying and performing the commissioned flute music of the "AIDS Memorial Concert" series fills a noticeable gap in research about AIDS-related instrumental music while also demonstrating the importance of such music and concerts as conduits for remembrance and healing.

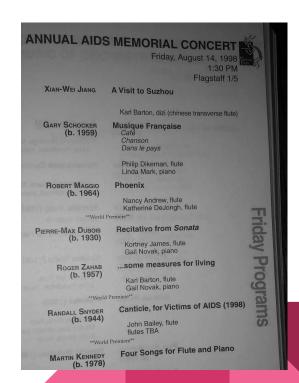
Background and Literature Review

- Majority of AIDS-related music has text
 - Broadway musicals, "Rent" (1996)
 - AIDS Quilt Songbook (1992)
- Composers also wrote instrumental music
 - John Corigliano's Symphony No. 1 (1990)
 - New York Times reviews
 - 1993 semiotics article by Sellnow
 - 2007 dissertation by Tift
 - 2013 article by Bergman
 - Robert Savage's "AIDS Ward Scherzo" (1998)
 - 2015 dissertation by Ostermiller
 - 2019 *NYT* interview with Corigliano
- No literature concerning "AIDS Memorial Concert" series



Methodology and Preliminary Findings

- Obtain "AIDS Memorial Concert" programs
- Conduct interviews with concert coordinator, composers, performers, and audience members
- Programs revealed six commissioned works
- 13 interviews conducted via Zoom and email
 - Consent obtained by all participants
 - Followed pre-determined interview questions
 - Full video recordings and transcripts available
- Revealed personal and historical importance
- Reconstituting music into AIDS-related repertoire



New Findings and Clarifications

- Martin Kennedy's music omitted from lecture-recital
 - "Souvenir" mismarked as a commission
 - "Four Songs for flute and piano" commissioned by Thomas Robertello
 - Neither piece programmatically about AIDS
- Paul Basler's pieces swapped
 - "Vocalise-Waltz" commissioned by Eldred Spell, not programmatically about AIDS
 - o "Sonata for flute and piano" (1991) performed on 1995 concert
- Two unmarked commissions discovered
 - "Short Suite for flute and dancer" by Paul Ferguson
 - "All the Words to All the Songs" by Dan Welcher
- Unifying themes of memory, loss, and death



Short Suite for flute and dancer by Paul Ferguson

- Commissioned for the 1995 concert by Mary Kay Robinson and George Pope
- Performed by both Mary Kay Robinson and George Pope
- Dedication "to the memory of Andy Coburn" Akron Symphony clarinetist
- Three jazzy movements
 - o II. Blues
 - Chromatic instability
 - Passionate development
 - Sad and somber

Paul Ferguson (b. 1958)



Short Suite for flute and dancer by Paul Ferguson

II. Blues

Vincenzo Volpe, flute

Sonata for flute and piano by Paul Basler

- Written in 1991 in reaction to loss from AIDS
- Performed by Eldred Spell and Lillian Pearson on the 1995 concert
- Basler says there is "a great deal of anger, pain, and sorrow in the work," immediately reflective of the AIDS crisis
- Second movement, "Elegy (Loss of Innocence)"
 - 1995 program book includes dedication "in memory of Eli Thomas, Jr."
 - Eli's death and relative isolation catalyzed the flute sonata

Paul Basler (b. 1963)



Sonata for flute and piano by Paul Basler

II. Elegy (Loss of Innocence)

Vincenzo Volpe, flute Chiaoyu Lin, piano

All the Words to All the Songs by Dan Welcher

- Commissioned by Nancy Andrew for 1996 concert
- Performed by Nancy Andrew and Bari Mort
- Previously titled "Music for Vinson" dedicated to Vinson Hammond
- Friendship between Andrew, Hammond, and Welcher
- Piece quotes Elvis's cover of "Can't Help Falling in Love"
 - Comment on the NBC "Today" Show "I know all the words to all the songs."
 - Memory of Hammond memorialized through the song
 - Welcher calls the piece a "spiritual benediction"

Dan Welcher (b. 1948)



All the Words to All the Songs by Dan Welcher

Vincenzo Volpe, flute Chiaoyu Lin, piano

Lux Aeterna by William Ferris

- Commissioned by Donald Peck, Chicago
 Symphony Orchestra emeritus principal flute
- Performed on 1997 concert by Jason Bladzik and Terri Van Valkinburgh
- Dedication on manuscript
 - "To the memory of all of our friends, colleagues, and music-makers who have entered into The Fallen Life."
- Tempo descriptions "dreamily," "mysteriously"
- Harmonically unstable, resolutions at endpoints
- Sensations of searching, wandering → memory

William Ferris (1937-2000)



Lux Aeterna by William Ferris

Vincenzo Volpe, flute Cristian Días, viola

Canticle by Randall Snyder

- Commissioned by John Bailey, UNL professor
- Performed on 1998 concert by John Bailey and Leonard Garrison
- Dedication in program book "for victims of AIDS"
- Unmistakably evokes pain and loss
 - "A sick person trying to break away from their fate"
 - Dissonant chromaticism, pitch bends, quarter tones, extreme dynamics and tessitura
 - Coda is a final resignation to AIDS

Randall Snyder (b. 1944)



Canticle by Randall Snyder

Vincenzo Volpe, flute Anne Leutkenhaus, flute

...some measures for living by Roger Zahab

- Commissioned by, written for, and dedicated to George Pope
- Performed on 1998 concert by Karl Barton and Gail Novak
- Zahab says "one really has to live in the moment" when performing this piece
 - Dolce section is disrupted by leaps and rhythms
 - "Fleeting time" chaotic scherzo fades into nothing
 - Playful homage to victims of AIDS

Roger Zahab (b. 1957)



...some measures for living by Roger Zahab

Vincenzo Volpe, flute Chiaoyu Lin, piano

Phoenix by Robert Maggio

- Commissioned by George Pope
- Performed on the 1998 concert by Nancy Andrew and Katherine DeJongh
- Maggio says piece is "hugely cathartic"
- Musical depiction of the fabled phoenix
 - Reflects the death of many to AIDS
 - Also their rebirth through music and memory
 - Dissonant minor-second runs signal bird bursting into flames
 - Ascending and triumphant melodic line for rebirth, heroic and resilient resolution

Robert Maggio (b. 1964)



Phoenix by Robert Maggio

- I. ...consuming itself in fire...
- II. ...rising renewed from the ashes...

Vincenzo Volpe, flute Anne Leutkenhaus, flute

Conclusion

- Closing noticeable gap in research about AIDS-related instrumental music
- Important conduits for remembrance and healing
- Repairs institutional history about the "AIDS Memorial Concert" series
- Reconstitutes works back into current repertory
- What's next? More research, documents, and a CD

Thank you!

