

# Peter Whitehead

Junior Bassoon Recital  
Organ Hall | 2 March 2015 | 7:30pm

## Sonata for Bassoon and Piano (1981)

John Steinmetz  
(1951-)

- I. Prelude*
- II. Browning*
- III. Lament*

Alexander Tom - piano

Contrary to what the title would suggest, this “sonata” is not in sonata form. Steinmetz instead describes it as “music to be sounded, music for invoking different emotional states.” The first movement of this piece is meant to be an emotional statement of feelings. It explores the tonal fluidity that can be achieved between the instrument and the musician. (Steinmetz, 1981) It is as if the bassoon is the performer’s voice, singing through unbroken glissandos. The second movement is a setting for the English Renaissance tune called “Browning”. It constantly repeats the main melody, elaborating on that idea. The composition of this movement imitates the Renaissance group of performing instruments called a consort. In the characteristic compositional style of Steinmetz, the third movement is not cheery, but rather mournful, as the name would suggest. He describes the musical character of this movement as “spacious and unhurried, yet brimming with emotion.” (Steinmetz, 1981) One could describe it portraying not a sad emotion, but rather a bittersweet thought or a fond reminiscing of time gone by.

## INTERMISSION

## Sonata Prima (1645)

Giovanni Antonio Bertoli  
(1605-1669)

Jenny Ostrowski – organ

Giovanni Bertoli was a virtuoso bassoonist and composer from Italy who lived most of his life in and around Venice. His Sonata Prima is the oldest known published bassoon work from a collection called *Compositioni musicali*. The sonata is formally embryonic, meaning that the structure of Bertoli’s composition is based off developing and evolving motives. The tonal structure of this sonata is quadripartite, revolving around successive shifting from tonic, to dominant, to the relative major, and the sub-dominant. In addition to a unique form, this piece requires a different performance approach. Since this piece was most probably written for dulcian, the precursor to the bassoon, modern bassoon tone must be changed to have a historically accurate performance. Tone must be wider and more unrefined. Additionally, the dynamic range of the dulcian was not as nuanced as the modern bassoon, consequently, dynamics in Sonata Prima are stepped, changing not gradually but suddenly, and removing all gradual diminuendos or crescendos.



## School of Music

## Concerto for 2 Bassoons in F Major

I. *Allegro moderato*

II. *Andante grazioso*

III. *Allegro*

Johann Baptist Wanhal

(1739-1813)

Alex Toenniges – bassoon

Tommy Chan – piano

Johann Baptist Wanhal was a Czech composer of the 18<sup>th</sup> century who, throughout his life, was most active in Vienna. The classical style in which this is written is close to that of Haydn, borrowing the pleasant robustness of Haydn's compositional style and sparingly pairing it with nuanced characteristics of the Italian voluptuousness heard in Mozart. The first movement takes up more than half of the total time from the piece, filled with sparkling arpeggios, trills, and turns. Throughout the piece, it is not a battle between two bassoons, but more accurately described as a playful romp between two equally written soloists. The entire piece is characterized as a back and forth between two bassoons, creating a conversation and challenging the two soloists to carefully and attentively listen to each other. The slowness of the *Andante grazioso* is not for mournful affections but rather a reflective and poignantly thoughtful tempo. It is this subtly that draws out the emotional content of the movement, as both bassoons play more together with only the odd conversational passage. The final *Allegro* movement is a wrapping up of the playful and spritely theme seen in the first movement. With an energetic finale between the two bassoons, the piece ends on an emotional high note.



## School of Music