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Harpsichordist Jory Vinikour returns to the suburbs

The international career of harpsichordist Jory Vinikour continues apace, with a new recital recording in current release and a busy schedule in Europe and the United States. Vinikour, son of Dr. Ben Vinikour of Mount Prospect, maintains his residence and studio in Paris, but he is back home in the suburbs this week. He will give the latest in his ongoing series of free recitals at Libertyville's First Presbyterian Church at 5 p.m. Sunday. This summer, he appeared on the weekly noontime Dame Myra Hess Concert Series at the Chicago Cultural Center.

Vinikour's recording, for the Consonance label, is titled "Chaconne," and it offers a selection of harpsichord works from 11 composers spanning four centuries. The title is appropriate in that Vinikour explores the development of two kindred musical forms over a four-century period (17th through 20th).

"What I've done is take the chaconne, and its related form, the passacaglia, and trace their evolution in keyboard music all the way from (Girolamo) Frescobaldi through (Gyorgy) Ligeti, and show how these two forms (chaconne and passacaglia) at first were different types of works while they were at the same time related," Vinikour said.

The Frescobaldi work that begins the album, *Cento Partite sopra Passacagli*, is a big work "It's more than 100 variations on the passacaglia, and Frescobaldi goes back and forth between the passacaglia and chaconne in order to contrast the two, before finally just mixing them together," he said.

"That is a foreshadowing of what other composers would eventually do, when the two types of pieces became sort of one and the same."

It's interesting, Vinikour adds, that J.S. Bach, the best-known of the Baroque-era composers, still managed to maintain the individuality between the two forms with his *Chaconne for Solo Violin* and *Passacaglia for Organ*.

The CD also contains works in the chaconne and passacaglia forms by 17th-century composers Bernardo Storace, Johann Kaspar von Keril, Louis Couperin and George Muffat, and 18th-century works by Johann Fischer, Elisabeth de la Guerre, Francois Couperin (the nephew of Louis Couperin), George Frideric Handel and Jacques Duphy. Then, there is the big 19th-century gap, with the two 20th-century works by Ligeti concluding the album. The 19th century is missing because, to put it simply, the harpsichord was not a fashionable instrument among the composers of the Romantic era.

"There's nothing out there," said Vinikour. "Oh, there are little snippets, from when the harpsichord started to make its revival. But really, it was a forgotten instrument during that period." However, the harpsichord was still played occasionally in public during the 19th century.

"An example is the famous performer, (Ignaz) Moscheles (1794-1870)," Vinikour said. "There are many indications he loved the harpsichord, that he had a good instrument at his disposal and would play it at salon concerts. But for the most part, the harpsichord was a total dinosaur in the 19th century."

The two Ligeti pieces are given wonderful interpretations by Vinikour, who shows an obvious affinity for these contemporary works. One is titled Passacaglia ungherese and the other Hungarian Rock (Chaconne). Both date from 1978 and each runs about five minutes.

"I don't want to call them parodies, but they are really Ligeti's homage to the Baroque style," Vinikour said. "In these pieces, he makes a very clear difference between the passacaglia and chaconne forms and goes back to the very earliest definitions of these pieces. The Passacaglia ungherese is a very clever and difficult piece."

Vinikour notes that the CD is available in the larger area record stores, like Tower, which stock classical recordings. The catalog number is Consonance 8 1 -0007

"I'm doing this one CD at a time; I don't have a long-term deal," he said. "I would like next to record Bach's 'Goldberg Variations,' using an absolute stunning copy of a one-off German instrument, which is contemporary not only from Bach's time but from Bach's region." he said. "The 'Goldberg Variations' is one of the very few pieces which Bach published stipulating 'for the harpsichord, with two keyboards'."

Bill Gowen