

A Clockwork Hour

By [Maureen Turquet](#)

"A Clockwork Hour" by Maureen Turquet, piano and Thomas Dubos, bassoon

Program presented on December 8th 2001 in the theatre of Bouvet-Ladubay, seat of the Anthony Burgess Society, for the University of Angers Symposium "The Atavars of a Clockwork Orange"

Notes on the program:

The idea was to concoct a program of exactly 60 minutes of music, a "clockwork hour", introduced by the prelude of Burgess' play version of *A Clockwork Orange* and escorted out by its finale. In addition to performing compositions of Burgess' own hand, I wished to offer a glimpse of the musical scores he possessed. These pieces, few and very selective, I found among his personal library collections at the Anthony Burgess Center of the University of Angers.

The introductory prelude, with its omnipresent theme from Beethoven's 9th Symphony, slipped naturally into an excerpt from Beethoven's last piano sonata, and then led on to other selections from Burgess' personal library : Bach, Wagner, Chopin, Poulenc, Warlock and Debussy, especially his *Prélude à l'Après-Midi d'un faune*, Burgess' veritable "mascotte" piece.

Burgess declared that, adolescent, falling upon this melody quite by accident while fiddling around with a homemade radio, he experienced such a tremendous sensorial shock that he thereupon decided to be a composer. This decision did result in a certain frustration since later,

Burgess stated "It was, I suppose, a doubt about the capacity of music to provide me with a language that drove me to the craft of the novel." (In *This Man and Music*, 1982)

So, using this wonderful Debussy melody as a "leitmotif" sung by the bassoon, we also introduced selections by Errol Garner, Thelonius Monk and Percy Grainger in honor of Burgess' eclectic musical interests and his capacity to improvise in popular and jazz mediums.

Burgess' library contains no less than three complete editions of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* and he himself composed 24 preludes and fugues under the modest self-jesting title *The Bad-Tempered Electronic Keyboard* (1985). I chose eleven preludes and a fugue from this volume, his "Tango for Piano" (1984), and then played with Thomas Dubos an arrangement for bassoon and piano of "Rhapsody" and "Mister Coale's Maggotte" (1993) before concluding with "The Third Sonata for Great Bass Recorder (or bassoon) and Piano" (1993), one of Burgess' very last compositions.

The Finale from *A Clockwork Orange* again gives first place to Beethoven's 9th Symphony, but it contains a wonderful "clin d'oeil": over and above the piano's "Ode to Joy" theme floats the melody of "Singing in the Rain!"