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2021-2022

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Sara Wang, piano
Senior Honors Recital

Sunday, February 20, 2022, 2:00 p.m.

Emerson Concert Hall | Schwartz Center for Performing Arts

Program

Prelude and Fugue No. 4
in C-sharp Minor, BWV 849

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Nocturne in B Major, op. 62, No. 1

Frédéric Chopin
(1810-1849)

Sonata No. 31 in A-flat Major, op. 110

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

—Intermission—

Andante Spianato et Grande Polonaise Brillante
in E-flat Major, op. 22

Chopin

Sonata No. 3 in F-sharp Minor, op. 23
I. *Drammatico*

Alexander Scriabin
(1872-1915)

This recital is presented by the Department of Music at Emory University.
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Program Notes

Prelude and Fugue No. 4 in C-sharp Minor, BWV 849

Preludes and Fugues are a set of keyboard works Johann Sebastian Bach composed for “musical youth eager to learn.” With the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, keyboard beginners and professionals could work on different skill sets step by step. The preludes and fugues could be played on all kinds of keyboard instruments including clavichord, harpsichord, organ, and piano.

The C-sharp Minor Prelude and Fugue, BWV 849, is one of the most complex works in the series. As there are five voices in the fugue, it is extremely challenging for performers to demonstrate all the subjects throughout the piece. In fact, there are only two fugues with five voices in all 48 preludes and fugues. Something that makes this prelude and fugue particularly difficult is that it is arguably a double fugue. In both the prelude and the fugue, the identification of subjects, answers, and counterpoints between multiple voices is extremely important.

Overall, the prelude has a solemn and calming atmosphere, similar to a Gregorian chant—a type of early medieval church music with parallel music employed in which voices are sung in the same tune but at different pitches. The prelude is written in four voices and could be divided into two sections. A unique feature of BWV 849 is that the prelude is maintained mostly without modulations. Bach uses sequences instead of modulations to create layers throughout the prelude. In brief, the prelude serves as a harbinger of the fugue’s polyphonic structure, with voices imitating and overlapping each other.

The fugue features a five-voiced polyphonic structure with two main subjects. The first subject appears with whole notes, half notes, and a slur, setting up the overall tempo and extending the solemn atmosphere from the prelude. The second appears with quarter notes and eighth notes also in a *legato* manner. The last subject features a relatively big leap of fourths and the repetition of the F-sharp note in the left hand. The texture of the three subjects differs from each other significantly. Sequences of *stretti* occur in the last passage of the fugue; the subjects, answers, and counterpoints simultaneously exist and overlap each other. As they intertwine, the mixture of multiple textures creates a grand harmonization with a conclusive resolution.

Nocturne in B Major, op. 62, No. 1

Op. 62 is the last opus of Frederic Chopin’s nocturnes. The two nocturnes, op. 62 No. 1 in B Major and No. 2 in E Major, were composed in 1846 and dedicated to Mademoiselle R. de Konneritz. The Nocturne in B Major

opens with a harpsichord-like improvisatory texture. The chord expands in a sudden manner, then dissolves with a decrescendo and a rest. With the marking *dolce legato* before the main theme of the piece starts, it could be inferred that this nocturne should be played in a sweet and gentle manner. In fact, the nocturnes show an extremely intimate side of the composer. As the dynamics don't change much throughout the piece, the emotional twists and turns are demonstrated throughout textural changes.

The nocturne is played in the tempo *andante*. However, with several unexpected syncopations and delicate runs inserted in the middle section, Chopin creates rhythmic flexibility within the piece. The main theme unfolds smoothly after the introductory chords, however both hands experience some lofty leaps after the first motif, creating several noticeable climaxes within the flowing melody. Although there are several variations and modulations made throughout the first section, the theme is always brought back by the B-major chord. Hence, the melody moves like a wheel, with the main subject returning again and again. This interpretation seeks to evoke unremitting emotional responses by repeating and altering the *legato* theme.

The middle section modulates to A-flat major with a brighter character. This section features a series of syncopations and sequences; it is relatively simple writing compared to the previous as there are not as many notes involved. Following the middle section is a series of trills that moves the piece back to B major. Although the markings *poco piu lento* and *rallentando* intend to decrease the tempo, the trills make the transition process extraordinarily smooth by its streamlike nature. Along with the trills, the use of ascending fourths before the B major chord is brought back.

The coda features a series of lamenting chords with echoey sixteenth notes. The delicate and sensitive harmonies linger in the audience's heart, leading to a warm, assuring closure with repeating B major chords.

Sonata No. 31 in A-flat Major, op. 110

Out of Ludwig van Beethoven's 32 piano sonatas, the A-flat Major Piano Sonata is the penultimate one and was written in 1821. In 1820, Beethoven agreed to compose three sonatas (ops. 109, 110, and 111) for a Berlin publisher Adolf Martin Schlesinger. Although Beethoven's health deteriorated and he continued to work on *Missa Solemnis*, Beethoven managed to complete the autograph of op. 110 in December 1821. The sonata is in three movements, with tempo markings that are not commonly seen in ordinary sonata forms. Beethoven bridges the movements by maintaining the same dynamics between each movement.

The first movement, *Moderato cantabile molto espressivo*, opens gently in a singing manner, serving as a melodious introduction. Having a melodic nature, the subject is always played in *legato* with subtle dynamic changes. Following the theme is an ornamental arpeggio. Covering up to five octaves, the flowing arpeggios are delicate passages that lead the audience into the following textural contrast and dynamic tension throughout the movement.

The second movement, *Allegro molto*, is a scherzo featuring a fast-moving, short composition with a boisterous character. The unconventional markings of syncopation and dynamic contrasts not only demonstrate the heroic characteristic of the composer, but also catch the audience's attention by adding contrast to the composition. The repetition of subjects, the coda at the end of the movement, and the broad use of fermatas are all unique structural elements that make this movement stand out as a heart-lightening piece of art.

The third movement, *Adagio ma non troppo–Allegro ma non troppo*, is the heart of the sonata. The movement presents an opera-like structure, featuring a recitative before the first *arioso* section. The flexibility of the tempo allows performers for a broad range of musical interpretation. Following the opening is an A-flat minor *arioso dolente*, a lamenting song that represents a deep mourn. The three-voice fugue after the *arioso dolente* has its significance in the complexity of texture. The subjects come in one after another, giving the audience space to recognize what is being added in, but also creating a sophisticated structure with the accumulation of strettis. Later, the *arioso* comes back after the first fugue following by an inverted fugue, that further reinstates the theme of the third movement. The third movement closes the sonata with forward-moving arpeggios on the left hand that leads to a big coda, concluding the sonata with a heroic character.

Andante Spianato et Grande Polonaise Brillante in E-flat Major, op. 22

Frederic Chopin's *Andante Spianato et Grande Polonaise Brillante* in E-flat Major is a piece of concert music for piano and orchestra. However, it is also performed as a solo work. Structurally, the piece includes an introduction—*Andante Spianato* in G Major—and the *Grande Polonaise Brillante* in E-flat Major. In 1830–1831, Chopin completed the second part of the piece in Vienna. The *Andante Spianato*, however, was not completed until 1834 in Paris. Chopin later combined the two parts together with a fanfare-like passage and published the complete work in 1836.

The *Andante Spianato* presents with a nocturne-like introductory section with a 6/8 time signature. The tranquility in the movement is brought out by its smooth and flowing texture. It is not only aesthetically pleasing, but also brings structural and rhythmic contrast to the later

Grande Polonaise Brillante. The transition between the two sections is a brilliantly virtuosic one, featuring a series of fast-moving chords with a huge crescendo. The *Grande Polonaise Brillante* is composed in a brilliant style with a bright and heroic character. Long runs, big leaps, delicate trills, and energetic arpeggios are heard in the piece, with grand chords in the left to keep a steady beat in the style of a polonaise. The variety of elements Chopin implements add vibrance to this piece and provide energy that leads to a heroic ending.

The *Andante Spianato et Grande Polonaise Brillante* in E-flat Major, op. 22 is Chopin's last concertizing piece. Remarkably, the polonaise works have also been something Chopin wanted to compose since he was in Warsaw. In fact, Chopin's first composition when he was seven years old was a polonaise, displaying his love towards his country. The significance of this piece is noticeable to date, as op. 22 is quoted in pop songs and even used over the final credits of the 2002 film *The Pianist*.

Sonata No. 3 in F-sharp Minor, op. 23

The F-sharp Minor Piano Sonata No. 3 was composed in Alexander Scriabin's earlier years when his career had just begun. He completed this sonata in 1898, the year after he married his wife, Vera Ivanovna Isakovich, and before he began teaching at the Moscow Conservatory. Although composed in Scriabin's youth, the musical elements and compositional style in the piece significantly influenced his later works.

The F-sharp Minor Piano Sonata No. 3 includes four movements that describe the "states of soul," with the first movement being described as an "untamed soul, free and wild, thrown into the whirlpool of suffering and pain." It presents a conventional sonata form in a romantic tradition. The length of the first theme is short, as it appears merely in eight bars. However, there are syncopations and ties written within the eight bars, enriching the overall rhythmic variety of the first theme. Later in the development section, Scriabin combined multiple themes together, intertwining them into layers. The accumulation of themes creates a rich texture with vast dynamic contrasts leading to various climaxes. Other than the dynamic contrasts, the diversity of rhythmic elements Scriabin implements throughout the piece also makes the first movement "turbulent," which demonstrates the state of "thrown into the whirlpool of suffering and pain." The recapitulation features a heroically assertive character, with immense leaps and an overall increasing dynamic.

Scriabin was diagnosed with synesthesia, a cognitive disorder that stimulates a second sensual impression that responds to the first. However, the phenomenon is often considered a blessing for Scriabin, as this involuntary experience adds color contrasts to his musical elements. Scriabin's association with synesthesia is evident in the harmonically

diverse chords, such as the 13th dominant chord that could be found in this sonata frequently.

Despite plenty of atonal scales involved, Scriabin's Piano Sonata No. 3 in F-sharp Minor is written in a romantic tradition that stimulates emotional responses.

Sara Wang, piano

Sara Wang, 23, is a senior at Emory double-majoring in business and music. Wang began studying piano with Martina (Hsiu-Shan) Liao at age five and later studied with Ethan (Chin-Chuan) Chang for more than a decade in her homeland, Taiwan. At age 11, Wang held her first solo recital in Taichung, Taiwan; since then, she has been invited to perform as a soloist in various performance venues and events.

Wang has competed in a number of regional and national piano competitions and has received top honors and awards. Most recently, Wang won the GMTA Piano Performance Middle College Division (2021), was awarded the first alternate of GMTA Piano Performance Lower College Division (2020), won the Georgia Young Artist solo piano division of Music Teachers National Association Competition (2019), and received an honorable mention in the Emory Concerto and Aria Competition (2019). She also performed sophomore and junior solo piano recitals in 2019 and 2021, respectively.

In addition to piano performance, Wang had conducted research with the Music Therapy Association of Taiwan analyzing psychological development, and has suggested possible methods for promoting healing through music therapy. The research paper was later submitted to the *Wall Street Journal*, *U.S. News*, and *Time* magazine.

Wang studied with Keiko Ransom and William Ransom during her first year at Emory, and she currently studies under Elena Cholakova. In college, she began playing chamber music and two-piano repertoire and found a great passion in playing with other musicians.

During the summers, Wang regularly attends music festivals including the Paris International Sessions, International de Musica de Torrelodones, and National Taipei University of Education International Piano Festival and Prague Piano Festival. She wholeheartedly appreciates the joy she has experienced and the amazing friends she has made through music.

Wang would like to thank her family, friends, and teachers for their boundless support.

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