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2021-2022

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MUSIC@ EMORY

Jason Lin, piano
Senior Honors Recital

Sunday, February 20, 2022, 5:00 p.m.

Emerson Concert Hall
Schwartz Center for Performing Arts

Program

Piano Sonata in A Major, D. 959

Franz Schubert
(1797–1828)

- I. *Allegro*
- II. *Andantino*
- III. *Scherzo: Allegro vivace*
- IV. *Rondo: Allegretto*

—Intermission—

Rhapsodie espagnole, S. 254

Franz Liszt
(1811–1886)

This recital is presented by the Department of Music at Emory University.
music.emory.edu

Program Notes

Piano Sonata in A Major, D. 959 (1828)

Despite his untimely death at the relatively young age of 31 years, and a career spanning fewer than 20 years, Franz Schubert composed a significant amount of music. He was especially prolific in the vocal genre, producing more than 600 *lieder* (songs) and several *liederkreis* (song cycles). As a teenager, Schubert confided in his diary that music should rid itself of “bizarre” German ideas, referring to Beethoven, but would later revise this view and hold him in great esteem. Schubert passed away in November 1828 from syphilis, which he contracted during his mid-20s, and typhoid fever that exacerbated his fragile health condition.

Schubert composed his three late piano sonatas, D. 958, D. 959, and D. 960, simultaneously between May and September 1828, but these sonatas would not be published until 11 years after his death. While Schubert initially intended to dedicate these sonatas to his pupil, Johann Hummel, the publisher ended up dedicating them to Robert Schumann, a leading composer and music critic who praised Schubert’s earlier works. Upon reviewing these late sonatas, Schumann criticized them, noting their “rippling along from page to page . . . as if there could be no end.” His disapproval reflected that of the general public, and it took at least 100 years following Schubert’s death for these works to finally gain acceptance in the classical piano repertoire.

Schubert’s influences, which ranged from Beethoven’s compositional style to his own vocal works, are apparent in all four movements of the Piano Sonata in A Major, D. 959. The first movement, written in typical sonata-allegro form, opens with an emboldened and chorale-like subject that stresses the development of harmonic tension to the subdominant and its subsequent relaxation to the dominant. Likewise, the second theme is written in the standard four-part writing and features a melody that leaps to its apex before resolving downward in a stepwise manner. Schubert greatly expands the second theme with arpeggios and scales and explores distantly related keys such as C major and B minor in the development, as if to demonstrate that time was under his control. The first movement ends with a tranquil coda that restates the chorale-like subject and features a penultimate arpeggiation of the Neapolitan harmony.

The *Andantino* is written in ternary form, with the A section comprised of a lamenting, rather hopeless, melody in F-sharp minor. This gradually gives way to a chaotic and turbulent outburst of the B section, which has been described by Brendel as “the musical equivalent of a nervous

breakdown.” The A section eventually comes back but, this time, with a glimmer of hope in C-sharp major. However, this optimistic prospect is soon dashed by the melody’s return to F-sharp minor. The movement ends with rumbling, arpeggiated chords in the bass that prolong a plagal cadence in F-sharp minor, portraying Schubert’s drawn-out pleading and eventual reckoning with death. There is evidence that this movement may have been inspired by an earlier Schubert song, *Pilgerweise*, whose lyrics describe a wanderer who roams silently from house to house on Earth.

The third movement is a scherzo/trio, whose generally lighthearted nature suggests that Schubert had no intimation of his imminent death. Notwithstanding, the spirit of the *Andantino* finds its way into this movement with an unanticipated dramatic passage in C-sharp minor in the middle of the scherzo. Additionally, the chorale-like theme of the first movement makes an appearance in the inner-voice chords at the beginning of the trio.

The final movement bears resemblance to the *Finale* of Beethoven’s G-Major piano sonata, op. 31, No. 1, with both featuring a sonata rondo formal structure and a 16-bar theme that is first stated in the treble before moving into the bass. Near the end of the development, Schubert hints at the first movement of Beethoven’s *Moonlight Sonata*. Just as the piece seems to end, the initial theme of the fourth movement reappears, but in several fragments separated by moments of painful silence. This eventually gives way to the *Presto*, which dashes toward the chordal motif found at the very beginning of the sonata’s first movement. That same motif ends the last movement and brings the entire work full circle.

Never having learned a substantial Schubertian work throughout my piano studies is one of the reasons I chose to study this piece. I believe I could benefit musically from intense study of one of Schubert’s piano sonatas. Additionally, analysis of this sonata has afforded me the opportunity to apply harmonic and formal theories learned in my undergraduate music theory courses to this piece. On a more personal note, the D. 959 sonata reminds me of a bittersweet ending to a fulfilling and exhilarating undergraduate piano journey. Through my intense analysis of this piece, my interpretation seeks to illuminate the Beethovenian and vocal influences inherent within the sonata.

Rhapsodie espagnole, S. 254 (1867)

Aside from his technically challenging *Transcendental* and *Paganini Études* and countless piano transcriptions of other composers’ works, Franz Liszt is best known for his *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, especially his most famous No. 2 in C-sharp minor. However, the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*

weren't the only rhapsodies Liszt wrote; he also composed *Ungarische rhapsodien* (*Romanian Rhapsody*) in 1846–1847 and *Rhapsodie espagnole* (*Spanish Rhapsody*) in 1863.

Rhapsodie espagnole draws upon the composer's "reminiscences" of his tour of the Iberian Peninsula between October 1844 and April 1845. Interestingly, Liszt composed this rhapsody in Rome and had the work published in Leipzig in 1867 with the help of his pianist friend, Hans von Bülow. Bülow would help popularize the work among the public and inspire an arrangement in 1902 by Busoni for piano and orchestra.

The piece begins with the *Folies d'Espagne*, or simply *La Folía*, theme in C-sharp minor after a brief introduction of flashy arpeggios that run up and down the length of the keyboard. Although the full name of the theme literally translates to "follies of Spain" in French, *La Folía* is derived from a "merry dance with castanets" that originated in Portugal; only later did the theme become popularized in Spain between the 15th and 17th centuries. From *La Folía*'s initial statement of its bare melody in the bass, Liszt gradually transforms and embellishes it with some of his signature compositional techniques, including parallel thirds and octaves.

The *Rhapsodie* then moves into the *Jota aragonesa*, whose two themes are based on an energetic, yet graceful dance from northeastern Spain. Short, melodic sequences and simultaneous ternary rhythm and polyrhythm are some of the distinguishing features of this Aragonese dance; in addition, the *Jota* is typically aided by castanets, which are hung differently—as to produce the characteristic "tak" and "toc" sound. It is worth noting that the *Jota* presented in Liszt's *Rhapsodie* may have been significantly influenced by the symphonic poem *Spanish Overture No. 1*, also known as *Capriccio brillante on the Jota Aragonesa*, by Mikhail Glinka. After all, Liszt was close friends with the Russian composer, and, after Glinka's death in 1857, his sister dedicated the *capriccio* to Liszt. Moreover, the first theme of the *Spanish Rhapsody*'s *Jota aragonesa* exploits the main subject of Glinka's *Capriccio*. The piece eventually returns with a triumphant announcement of *La Folía*, this time in D major, before arriving at an authentic cadence that reinforces the D major tonal center and signals the end of an Iberian musical adventure.

I was immediately captivated by the *Rhapsodie espagnole* when I initially heard it during my first year at Emory. The *Folies d'Espagne* theme, as well as its sheer power and technicality, made it a piece I knew I wanted to play during my undergraduate piano studies. Regretfully, I never got around to learning the *Rhapsodie* until this year when I realized that it could be one of the last and maybe only opportunities to earnestly learn, polish, and perform a piece before (hopefully) attending medical school. In a

way, the *Rhapsodie* exemplifies my time at Emory, from being a first-year student who didn't know very much, to my current position as a senior feeling that I have achieved and grown so much in the past four years. Through intensive scrutiny of *Rhapsodie espagnole*, my presentation attempts to highlight the intrinsic dancing nature of the piece.

Jason Lin, piano

Jason Lin, 21, is a senior at Emory studying chemistry and music. He is from Plano, Texas, and has been playing piano for 15 years. He currently studies under Elena Cholakova, director of piano studies. Since beginning his piano studies at age six with Melody Ouyang, Lin has gone on to receive top honors at state, regional, and national competitions including Arthur Fraser International Piano Competition, the Emory Concerto and Aria competition, GMTA, and MTNA. Lin debuted with the Plano Symphony Orchestra at age 10 and was invited back to perform for 8,000 students as part of its outreach program. At age 14, he performed with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra as a result of winning first prize at the Lynn Harrell Concerto Competition.

Outside of music, Lin serves as an organic chemistry teaching assistant; conducts research at the School of Medicine and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta; and volunteers at Re'Generation movement, a local non-profit organization, as a mentor and lead SAT math tutor. Lin is a member of the Mu Phi Epsilon fraternity as well as the Phi Beta Kappa and Omicron Delta Kappa honor societies. He is also the recipient of the William B. Dickinson Music and Dr. Kevin C. Limp Memorial Scholarships. In his spare time, Lin likes to travel, cook, learn foreign languages, and explore new cultures.

Lin would like to thank his parents and grandparents for their unending love and support; his past and current teachers including Alex McDonald, Marcy McDonald, Melody Ouyang, and Patricia Dinkins-Matthews; as well as his friends and mentors. Lin would also like to extend his immense gratitude and appreciation to his committee members, Elena Cholakova, Bradley Howard, and Matthew Weinschenk, for their guidance in preparation for his honors thesis in music.

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