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April 8, 2018

Honors Piano Recital

by

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2018

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An abstract of  
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences  
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Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Department of Music

2018

## Abstract

### Honors Piano Recital

By Xiaochen Chen

On Saturday, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018, Xiaochen Chen performed the following works for piano at Emerson Concert Hall of Schwartz Center for Performing Arts: Allegro de Concierto, op.46 by Enrique Granados, Piano Sonata No.14 in C Sharp Minor by Ludwig van Beethoven, Piano Concerto in G major I. Allegramente, by Maurice Ravel, Piano Sonata in C Sharp Minor, R. 21 by Padre Antonio Soler, and Prélude, Choral et Fugue by César Franck. David Zhao played the piano accompaniment for the work by Ravel.

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Recital Title: Un Après-midi d'un Voyageur

Xiaochen Chen, Piano  
Senior Honors Recital

David Zhao, Piano

Saturday, March 31, 2018, 2pm

**Program**

Allegro de Concierto, Op.46

Enrique Granados (1867-1916)

Piano Sonata No.14 in C Sharp Minor,  
Op.27, No. 2

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

- I. Adagio sostenuto
- II. Allegretto
- III. Presto agitato

Piano Concerto in G major

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

- I. Allegramente

David Zhao, Piano

Intermission

Piano Sonata in C Sharp Minor, R. 21

Padre Antonio Soler (1729-1783)

Prélude, Choral et Fugue

César Franck (1822-1890)

## Program Notes

### Enrique Granados (1867-1916)

#### **Allegro de Concierto, Op.46**

Enrique Granados was a Spanish pianist and composer who led the Spanish nationalist movement in music during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He composed extensively for piano, typically in a Romantic style. *Allegro de Concierto, Op.46* is a prize-winning piece that Granados composed in 1903 for a competition sponsored by the Real Conservatorio in Madrid. The virtuosity of the piece lies not only in its rich harmonies and complex figurations, but also in its expressive melodies and lyrical arpeggiations. The captivating theme consists of tonic chord arpeggios with added sixths, giving a faint reference to pentatonicism reminiscent of certain folklore melodies. When the first theme returns, the composer brings back the key of C sharp, which leads directly to the coda. The heart of this piece lies in the beauty of the second theme, which evokes a distant memory of a tragic love story. Granados adheres to the conventional ABA form, with the exposition written in tonic-dominant structure and the recapitulation revisiting the thematic material in the tonic key. However, various modulations still remind the listeners of his late-Romantic era writing style.



**Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)**  
**Piano Sonata No.14 in C Sharp Minor, Op.27, No. 2**

Undoubtedly one of the most famous piano sonatas ever written, Beethoven's *Sonata No.14 in C sharp minor*, commonly known as the *Moonlight Sonata*, is mesmerizing to listen to and exciting to play. Though composed in a classical three movement structure, the sonata deviates from the traditional fast-slow-fast arrangement. Instead, it holds off the rapid music until the very last movement, and begins with a slow first movement. Both sonatas of Op.27 bear the title *Quasi una fantasia*, almost a fantasy, which fits particularly well with the character and mood of the famous first movement of Op,27, No.2, *Adagio sostenuto*. Characterized by perpetual ostinato triplet rhythms played against a lamenting melody, the first movement makes a lasting impression with its solemn qualities. The tonic major to minor progression modulates to the second theme, reflecting element of "fantasia" free-form classical composition. The second movement, *Allegretto*, conforms to a more conventional scherzo and trio in D-flat major. Its cheerful and light disposition is maintained by having much of the movement played *piano*, with several indications of *fp* and *sforzando*'s that elevate its spirit. Often seen as a bridge between the first and the third movement, the lightheartedness of this movement fades, leading into the stormy third movement, *Presto agitato*. This busy movement reflects Beethoven's experiment with the Sonata form, where the most substantial theme of the sonata is placed at the very end. With several strategically placed *fortissimo* passages emphasizing its turbulent temper, it is a movement that demands both skill and control. Filled with arpeggios and accents, the first theme of this movement exudes agitation, which contrasts

with the more lyrical second theme. Despite *piano* markings throughout, the final movement of this sonata still produces powerful effects and lasting heights of emotion.

**Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)**  
**Piano Concerto in G major**

Completed in 1931 and premiered in January 1932, Ravel's *Piano Concerto in G Major* is known for its unbounded energy and brightness. Ravel's initial sketches of the piano concerto date back to 1928, but it was put on hold in 1929 since the composer was travelling frequently. It was not until 1930 that the composition of the G major concerto was resumed, and completed later in 1931. While the first and last movements are filled with high spirits, playfulness and occasional melancholy, the second movement enhances the inner and outer movements with a complete shift in mood and character as the emotional focus of the entire concerto. The three movements are written in typical classical structure, with two fast movements surrounding a slow one. The concerto's first movement *Allegramente* is filled with elements of the new jazz style, with the orchestra opening with a pentatonic scale played by the trumpet. The lengthy exposition section, which spans 106 measures and features a number of themes, begins with a roaring introduction by the orchestra followed by an eerie and mysterious piano soliloquy. As the orchestra re-enters with a blues-sounding statement, the second subject establishes itself with musical elements reminiscent of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. The rest of the movement seems to follow this trend of intertwinement between the piano and the orchestra, as the first subject appears and reappears in both piano and strings. Later, as the piano restates the second theme in the cadenza, the movement is pushed toward a powerful and enthusiastic coda that ends with a mixed descending G major-minor scale.

**Padre Antonio Soler (1729-1783)**  
**Piano Sonata in C Sharp Minor, R. 21**

Padre Antonio Soler was an accomplished Spanish composer whose career spanned the late Baroque period and early Classical era. Soler was also a monk and priest, having served as the *maestro de capilla* (person in charge of music-making) at the Escorial palace in Madrid. During his lifetime, Soler composed numerous sonatas for harpsichord and organ and wrote canonic church music. Soler is perhaps best known for having composed approximately 150 keyboard sonatas, catalogued with “R” numbers. His *Sonata in C Sharp Minor*, R 21, exemplifies both Soler’s individual style and his Spanish roots. Though the piece is written in a traditional binary form and maintains the same time signature throughout, the trills at the end of each section add a sense of liveliness and vibrancy to the melody.

**César Franck (1822-1890)****Prélude, Choral et Fugue**

Cesar Franck was a renowned composer, organist and pianist who wrote both symphonic and chamber works. Though born in Belgium, Franck spent most of his professional life studying, working and teaching in Paris. For most of Franck's career, he focused on composing symphonic works and organ repertoire, and seldom wrote for solo piano. In 1884, at the age of 62, he renewed his passion for solo piano music by developing new genres, exemplified by his masterpiece *Prélude, Choral et Fugue*. While the Prelude is filled with arpeggios in the accompaniment and accented thematic material, the Choral-- dominated by long, rolled chords-- presents its subject matter in the highest treble range throughout. According to Franck's student Vincent d'Indy, he initially planned to write a classical Prelude and Fugue, paying tribute to the venerable works of J.S. Bach. However, during his compositional process, he decided to include a Chorale connecting the Prelude and Fugue, personalizing a traditional form with an emotionally dense and thematically captivating middle section. After several transitional measures, the *Choral* section then modulates back to B minor in the beginning of the fugue, which layers and weaves together various thematic motives, leading to a fast-rolling cadenza, followed by the reappearance of the Prelude's theme. Finally, the *Choral* theme also reappears and is intertwined with the fugue, ending the grand coda by joining all previous melodic material.

## Biography

**Xiaochen Chen** is a senior pursuing a double major in piano performance and film studies. Born in China and raised in Sydney, Australia, Chen began playing at the age three, studying with Yang Chengang and later with Eleanor Young. During her high school years, she played with the Jazz ensemble as well as the orchestra. At Emory, she has studied under Dr. Elena Cholakova and Professor Deborah Slover. She participates in both solo and two-piano work, and accompanies both instrumental and voice students. Chen has also performed with Emory Wind Ensemble and the Tango Ensemble. She was a recipient of the Friends of Music scholarship and serves on the Music Advisory Board, which acts as a liaison between students and faculty in the music department. At Emory, Chen also participates in ChaiTunes, one of Emory's a cappella groups. In her spare time, she also enjoys teaching a small group of students of various ages. After college, she plans to attend law school, while continuing to further advance her musical endeavors. She is incredibly grateful to her parents, her piano teacher Dr. Elena Cholakova, her previous collaborative piano instructor Professor Deborah Slover, her advisor Dr. William Ransom and Dr. Kristin Wendland for their advisement and guidance. She would also like to thank her family, friends and Jerry for their endless love and support.

**David Zhao** is a current sophomore studying computer science at Georgia Tech. David has won awards and honors in numerous competitions, the AMTA Romantic and Impressionistic Piano Competition, and the Ruth Kern Young Artists Concerto Competition, where he made his orchestral debut with the Atlanta Community Symphony Orchestra in February 2016. He has received first prize for two consecutive years at the GMTA Piano Competition, and recently

received second place at this year's GMTA. David has participated in the InterHarmony Music Festival as well as Lee University's International Piano Festival and Competition. Additionally, David was the pianist for the Gwinnett County Youth Symphony as well as the pianist for Duluth High School's Chamber Orchestra.