

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

GRADUATE RECITAL IN PIANO

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For the degree of Master of Music,
Performance

By

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ABSTRACT

GRADUATE RECITAL IN PIANO

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Master of Music, Performance

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750): Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue in D Minor, BWV 903

Johann Sebastian Bach, universally recognized as the greatest composer of the Baroque Period, elevated keyboard compositions to a new level by developing and expanding new forms, genres, and styles. His numerous works include the Inventions, The Well-Tempered Clavier, The Art of Fugue, French and English Suites, Toccatas, Partitas, and a large amount of other works that have profoundly influenced and inspired many later composers. To this day, Bach is remembered as one of the most brilliant keyboard improvisers in the entire history of Western music. The *fantasy* in the Baroque era is a work in improvisatory style, usually written as a prelude that is followed by a fugue. It is similar in form to the *toccat*a. The *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue in D minor* contains Bach's most well-known *fantasy* - it is a masterpiece of virtuosity and bold harmonic structure.

Composed in the 1720s in Weimar, the piece is full of intense emotions, unique characters, and earns its title from the incredible modulations in the fantasy and the

extreme chromaticism in the fugue. Originally the piece was intended for harpsichord, the focal solo keyboard instrument of Bach's time. The extensive use of arpeggio writing could be a leading clue that the piece was intended for a harpsichord. The fantasy is divided into two main sections: prelude and recitative. The first section consists of virtuosic toccata-like passages. Following these technically demanding passages is an extremely emotional and sensitive recitative. When one is listening to this fantasy, it is so chromatic some might think that there is no key center. However, if one analyzes or studies the piece, one will see that Bach maintains tonal centers with the use of conventional cadences. The fugue begins with a complex semitonal subject. It is set in traditional fugal writing but gradually loosens and reveals elements of the fantasy.

The fugue has three sections with eleven entrances of the subject throughout the fugue. The first section is mostly in D minor. The second section modulates to A-minor, as the theme is introduced in remotely related keys. The third and final section returns to D minor and ends with virtuoso passagework, scales, and octave doubling in the bass.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827): Sonata No. 23 in F Minor, Op. 57

“Appassionata”

Ludwig van Beethoven's compositional life is divided into three periods. In the first period 1782-1802, Beethoven moved to Vienna to study with Johan Georg Albrechtsberger and Joseph Haydn; where he mastered the genres and the musical language of his time. During this period, Beethoven gradually developed his personal style of compositional writing. In the second period 1803-1814, he achieved a new level of drama and expression in his music. In the third period 1815-1827 (the year he died), Beethoven's compositions became more internal, complex, and experimental, making it

very difficult for performers to learn/play and for listeners to grasp.

Beethoven composed thirty-two piano sonatas. Each is a unique masterpiece in itself. One of the most well-known sonatas out of the thirty-two, *Piano Sonata No. 23 in F minor Op. 57 ("Appassionata")* was composed at the start of Beethoven's second period, between 1804-1805. Dedicated to Count Franz von Brunswick, the piece was composed on an Erard piano, which he received as a gift from Court Ferdinand von Waldstein.

The first movement, *Allegro assai*, is in the traditional sonata-allegro form, in 12/8 time. The movement moves through extremely surprising changes in dynamics, characters, and colors. It is understandable why Beethoven chose f-minor, as "F" was the lowest note on his piano. This is an example of Beethoven exploiting the limits of the piano's capabilities. The opening statement begins with two hands in unison, two octaves apart, along with an up-and-down arpeggio in dotted rhythm, which ends on the dominant. The theme obviously does not resolve, and is instead immediately stated a semitone higher (in G-flat). Even though the piece is written in the sonata three-part form (exposition, development, and recapitulation), it does not follow the traditional classical sonata form as it excludes the repeated exposition. Another unusual and interesting aspect of this movement is Beethoven's use of extreme dynamic changes such as unexpected changes from *pp* to *ff*. These sudden shifts of dynamics create a theatrical atmosphere of thrilling drama. Beethoven uses extremely rare dynamic marking of *ppp* to end the first movement, a marking that had never been previously attempted by other composers.

The second movement, *Andante con moto*, is in a theme and variation form, which consists of the theme and four variations. The movement begins with a D-flat

major chord, which is the major VI of F-minor. The main subject has two parts and uses elements from the second motive of the first movement. The subject is lighter and more hopeful in character compared to the first movement, and the variations are filled with beautiful musical lines. The only unusual feature of the second movement is in the last measures: instead of finishing the movement with a tonic chord, Beethoven ends the movement on a full diminished-seventh chord with a fermata, and this suspension leads directly into the turbulent third movement.

The third movement, *Allegro man non troppo - Presto*, begins with the same diminished-seventh chord, suddenly awakening from the second movement. It is a continuation of dramatic character of the first movement. The movement is in the traditional sonata form with exposition, development, and recapitulation. The drama of the movement lies in the continuous running notes. The drama does not weaken but keeps on growing all the way to the end of the piece. In the coda Beethoven introduces a new theme, which closes the piece with powerful and passionate flare.

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963): *Mélancolie*

Francis Poulenc was a French composer. He was part of Les Six, which was a confederation of French composers who rebelled against Impressionism or Germanicism. Members of this group included: George Auric, Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, Germaine Tailleferre, and Francis Poulenc. However, the group did not stay together long as they soon developed their own personal style of composition. Poulenc composed piano works in various genres, such as: Improvisation, Concerto, Toccata, Suite, Impromptu, Barcarolle, Nocturne, and Sonata. Among the many piano works by Poulenc, the *Mélancolie* is a one-movement character piece full of lyricism.

Mélancolie was composed in 1940 and first published in 1945. The word melancholy is defined as gloomy, pensive, sad, contemplative, and depression of the spirit. The piece is in D-flat major; however, the key changes throughout the piece. Poulenc uses many intriguing chords to create a “reminiscent” feeling. The piece is in three-part form. The first section is filled with colorful harmonies, tempo changes, and continuous modulations. The middle section is where the drama of the piece lies, which Poulenc creates with constant change of the keys, virtuosic passages, and unceasing tempo changes. Eventually, Poulenc brings us back to the melancholic mood in the third section by reinstating the melody from the first section. The third section brings back the material from the opening. In the end of the piece, Poulenc adds a tranquil coda that creates a sense of resolution.

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849):

1. Etude Op. 10, No. 9

2. Ballade No. 2, Op. 38

Frédéric Chopin was a Polish composer who spent most of his life in Paris and was known for writing extremely lyrical lines that are supported by intricate harmony. One can find many different genres in Chopin’s piano repertoire such as: Nocturne, Polonaise, Mazurka, Waltz, Sonata, Concerto, Etude and Ballade.

Etude Op. 10, No. 9, is part of a collection of 24 concert studies that Chopin composed throughout his life. Each etude is a virtuosic masterpiece, presenting different challenges for the performer. Today, these etudes are performed in world-famous concert halls around the globe. They can be performed as a set, individually, as an encore, or in concert as a stand-alone piece. *Etude Op. 10, No. 9*, challenges the left hand technique

with broken chords that are stretched out to as wide as 12th in a very fast tempo *Allegro molto agitato*, which makes it even more challenging for performers with smaller hands. The tempo, broken chords, and the harmony together create a constant forward motion that projects the agitation feeling. On top of the non-stop motion in the left hand, the right hand plays a rising two-note slurred phrase, followed by a two-measure phrase coming down, which creates an arch-like shape. Instead of writing a decrescendo dynamic to a descending phrase, Chopin marks crescendo, which creates a mood filled with drama and agitation. The etude finally ceases its agitation in the last two measures with *leggierissimo* (very light and delicately) and *smorzando* (dying away) markings and a resolution to a tonic chord.

Ballade No. 2, Op. 38 is one of the four Ballades by Chopin. All four Ballades were composed during Chopin's mature compositional period dating 1835-1842. Individually, each Ballade has its own distinctive form and tells its own story. Chopin does not give a title to any of his Ballades, because he believed that the music itself can and should tell the story. *Ballade No.2* (in F major) was completed in 1839, and starts with a slower section similar to the first and the fourth ballade. Chopin creates an illusion with a repeated opening note "C" in 6/8 time, appearing as if the piece had already been playing for some time. However, the listener can only pick it up when the piece reaches a certain volume. The first theme is written in a four-part chorale style, with a rhythmic pattern ♩, which suggests a worry-free feel. The middle section is based on a dramatic motif of rising octaves in the left hand. Meanwhile, the right hand has arpeggiated chords that are in the contrary direction of the left hand, resulting in overlapping effects like ocean waves. The uproar of the middle section gradually subsides and we hear the return

of the main theme. The theme begins to move through different keys and is immensely developed. As the piece moves through the development of the first theme, the piece returns to the passionate and dramatic middle section. This time around, the musical tension doesn't diminish but keeps growing with more suspense until it arrives at the coda, which is charged with even more agitation and passion. As the coda progresses, we find ourselves in the middle of a thrilling "waltz-like" rhythm. All of this development brings us back to the second theme once again, but this time it is transformed and compressed. The build up and the drama suddenly comes to a stop at the highest point of tension, catching the listeners at the edge of their seats with an aura of uncertainty of what is going to happen next. Finally, after a moment of stillness we hear the main theme once again; this time the theme is in the relative minor. The last few measures appear as if Chopin ran out of words - there is nothing more to be done and nothing more that can be said. After a long pause and a held breath comes the inevitable ending.

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953): Sonata No. 5 in C major, Op. 135

Sergei Prokofiev, a Russian composer, began piano and composition lessons at the age of eleven with Reinhold Glière. At the age of thirteen, Prokofiev entered the St. Petersburg Conservatory where he studied with Rimsky-Korsakov, Lyadov and Tcherepnin. In his book *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, Boris Berman (well established pianist, clinician, professor, and author), mentions that when Prokofiev made his debut as a pianist at the age of seventeen, the music critics and the audience called his compositions "unintelligible and ultra-modern". It wasn't until his Piano Concerto No. 1 and No. 2 that he attracted attention in a positive light in the Soviet Union. After leaving the conservatory, he traveled to London where he was inspired by Stravinsky's music.

Even though Prokofiev was a virtuosic pianist, he also composed for many other instruments, symphonies, ballets, and even an opera.

Sonata No.5 in C major, Op.135 (composed in 1923), is one of the nine sonatas that Prokofiev composed for the piano. This sonata was revised in 1953 due to complaints that the first version (Op. 38) was too difficult. Prokofiev dedicated this sonata to Pierre Souvtchinski, a musicologist and a friend. The sonata is in three movements: *Allegro tranquillo*, *Andantino*, and *Un poco allegretto*. This piece perfectly demonstrates Prokofiev's compositional style for the piano. In his book *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, Boris Berman writes, "One can easily find two types of piano texture: motoric, driven (usually fast) passages and meditative, lyrical (mostly slow) ones. When Prokofiev aims for a more powerful sound, he usually turns to scales and arpeggios, often spanning a wide range of the keyboard".

Allegro tranquillo is more introverted than most of the opening movements of Prokofiev's sonatas. One may hear the influence of French music in the lyrical melody (Prokofiev lived in Paris 1920-1935). The movement consists of three principal themes. The first theme is a simple melody with an Alberti bass accompaniment. The second theme is fairly short, filled with chromatic lines and a recurring, pleading motive. The development has a fanfare-like theme with many augmented chords in both hands which at times sound completely unrelated. The recapitulation follows a calming transition at the end of the development. Harmonically, the recap circles around the home key (C major), a nod to classical form. The theme starts in the high register and descends to the low bass register.

The *Andantino* movement is a collection of different characters and images. The mechanical, unchanging accompaniment, and an angular melodic line give it an ironic feel. The movement is full of fairy-tale imagery, which is very common when listening to Prokofiev's music. This movement can also be described as a dry waltz. The mechanical aspect continues throughout the entire movement without cessation until a sudden end, which gives the illusion that the machine ran out of batteries.

Un Poco Allegretto is in a sonata-rondo form, which used to be favored by the classical Viennese masters in their third movements. The opening theme is a combination of various motives and phrases, which are developed extensively later in the movement. The second theme presents a passionate melody full of wide intervals. The development uses both the first and second themes. Prokofiev writes the motives in various registers, tonalities, and voices. The recapitulation comes in a complex, chromatic, dissonant polyphonic setting. The climax of the movement uses the first theme but this time it is hammered out in a *fortissimo* with dissonant chords, creating a shocking effect. The coda is based on the elements of the second theme imitated in different voices. The dynamics of the coda are mostly hushed, except for a brief crescendo in the last few bars.

Ludwig van Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat major, Op. 73 “Emperor”

The *Emperor Concerto* is Beethoven's final piano concerto. It was composed between 1809 and 1811 in Vienna, and was dedicated to Archduke Rudolf, who was Beethoven's patron and pupil. It was published in 1811, premiered in Leipzig in November 1811, and featured Friedrich Schneider as soloist. In 1812, Carl Czerny (a student of Beethoven) gave the Vienna debut. The *Emperor Concerto* is composed in

Beethoven's "heroic" manner, which is found in most of Beethoven's music from 1802-1810. The concerto is in three movements: *Allegro*, *Adagio un poco mosso*, *Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo*.

The first movement, *Allegro*, opens with a series of flourished cadenzas in the piano part. During this period, it was a very uncommon way to introduce the solo instrument. The orchestra offers three resounding chords, and the piano responds to each with gushes of broken chords, trills, and scales. With each chord that the orchestra offers, the piano responds with exciting pianistic bravura. After the big cadenza introduction, there follows a long orchestral opening. This orchestra tutti introduces all of the themes for the movement. Despite Beethoven's use of "simple" chords, including a second theme constructed almost entirely out of tonic and dominant chords, the complexity lies in thematic transformations. The movement, apart from the opening cadenza, follows Beethoven's three-theme sonata structure for a concerto, except for the location of the cadenza, which traditionally comes towards the end of the movement. Even though Beethoven begins the coda with a "cadenza-like" passage in the piano, he specifies it in the score that "it is not cadenza and should not be played like one". The coda is quite long, typical of Beethoven's writing, and uses some of the themes from the movement with embellishments to create an exhilarating conclusion to a grand movement.

Adagio in B major is calm and reflective. The movement opens with a chorale-like section in the orchestra. In his book *The Rest is Noise*, Alex Ross states that Leonard Bernstein uses the melody from this movement in the song "Somewhere" from West Side Story. The first entrance of the piano is a response to the orchestra opening with a descending long melodic and expressive line. Beethoven used the word "dämmernd"

(dawning), which creates an illusion of new day rising. The movement moves through a few keys (B, F#, D) with variations of the main theme. When the music comes to stillness at the end of the movement, Beethoven makes drastic tonal shifts (characteristic of his music), by lowering the pitch by a semitone. By dropping the semitone from B to B-flat, the dominant of E-flat, Beethoven creates an uninterrupted and magic transition to the third movement. After the B-flat is introduced, Beethoven outlines the main theme of the last movement in E-flat major but remains in a slow tempo. Suddenly, this theme bursts into a new tempo and a new dynamic (from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo*).

Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo, the final movement of the concerto, is in a seven-part rondo form (ABACABA). The movement begins with the piano playing the main theme, which is followed by a long orchestra tutti. The B section of the rondo opens with a scale running up and down the piano, followed by a lyrical melody. The C section, the longest of all the sections, presents the theme from the A section in three different keys (C, A-flat, E). Following the C section, Beethoven writes a cadenza-like section in E minor, a semitone higher from the home key of E-flat major. The cadenza brings the piece back to the A section (in E-flat), being reinstated by the piano. Right before the end of the movement, the music comes to complete stillness once again, similar to the end of the second movement. Suddenly, the piano energetically flares into virtuosic scale passages that lead into the orchestra finishing the piece triumphantly.

Graduate Recital

November 2, 2013 @4:30pm

PROGRAM

Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue in D minor, BWV 903

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Sonata No. 23 in F minor, Op. 57 “Appassionata”

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

- I. Allegro assai
- II. Andante con moto
- III. Allegro ma non troppo – Presto

-Intermission-

Mélancolie

Francis Poulenc
(1899-1963)

Etude in F minor, Op. 10 No. 9

Frédéric Chopin
(1810-1849)

Ballade in F major, Op. 38

Sonata No. 5 in C major, Op. 135

Sergei Prokofiev
(1891-1953)

- I. Allegro tranquillo
- II. Andantino
- III. Un poco allegretto

Concerto Recital

May 10, 2014 @2:30pm

Program

Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat Major, Opus 73 “*Emperor*”

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

- I. Allegro
- II. Adagio
- III. Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo

Accompanist: Xu Tan

