

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

RECITAL AND CONCERTO PROGRAM NOTES ON WORKS BY BACH,  
MOZART, BEETHOVEN, BRAHMS, AND PROKOFIEV

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Music in Music, Performance

by

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California State University, Northridge

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## ABSTRACT

### RECITAL AND CONCERTO PROGRAM NOTES ON WORKS BY BACH, MOZART, BEETHOVEN, BRAHMS, and PROKOFIEV

By

Wen Pei Wang

Master of Music in Music, Performance

The paper will be demonstrating a brief historical background, interpretation, and program notes upon piano repertoires as well as the composers ranging from the Baroque period to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Chosen works are by Johann Sebastian Bach, Ludwig van Beethoven, Johannes Brahms, Sergei Prokofiev, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

## **Johann Sebastian Bach and the Well-Tempered Clavier**

Johann Sebastian Bach was born in Leipzig, Germany in 1685 and died in Leipzig in 1750. He was widely regarded as one of the greatest organists in Europe during his lifetime and was not as well known for his compositional output. His compositions became admired by many Classical era composers including Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Ludwig van Beethoven. His output has led him to be considered one of the most influential Western composers at all time.

The harpsichord was the most common string keyboard instrument used in Bach's time. Other keyboard instruments such as clavichord, pianoforte, organ, and even Lautenwerk, or lute-harpsichord, were also used in Bach's time. Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* (WTC) is a collection of preludes and fugues in all twenty-four major and minor keys in an ascending chromatic order that was groundbreaking for its time. The term *Well-Tempered Clavier* is written specifically for an instrument that has a fully chromatic keyboard allowing for the same instrument to play all twenty-four keys. Bach worked out the tuning which was a revolutionary step in keyboard all keyboard instruments to follow.

Book one of *Well-Tempered Clavier* BWV 846-69 was completed in 1722 and twenty years later he compiled Book II, BWV 870-893. Bach used the preludes and fugues in the WTC for the purpose of teaching pupils. They are written specifically to improve their finger training. Bach noted on the handwritten title page that these two series were “for the use and improvement of musical youth eager to learn—and for the particular delight of those already skilled in this discipline.” Even in the present day the *Well-Tempered Clavier* is still widely used and performed, and it is an important teaching material for musicians and composers.

**Prelude and Fugue in C Major, from Book II of the Well-Tempered Clavier,  
BWV 870, by Johann Sebastian Bach**

The prelude in C major was not completed until the final phase in 1742 even though it was designed to open the second collection. Both prelude and fugue were the second versions, and unlike other preludes and fugues in Book II the C major prelude was developed to resemble a style of organ writing, whereas most other preludes concentrate on the harpsichord style. The overall texture of the prelude is lyrical and implies a majestic-moment, specifically the left-hand C octave in the opening. This prelude is also different from other preludes in Book I, which contain improvisatory like material. The C Major prelude BWV 870 was through composed rather than structurally with harmonic suspensions over pedal points with a constant sixteenth-note driving line. The principle for the practice is the flow of unbroken legato in all four voices. An appropriate tempo has to assure the music will sound calm, can project the sonorous harmonies, and allow the clarity in the sixteenth-notes and thirty-second-notes.

The time signature of fugue is marked in 2/4, which gives a lively and energetic spirit to the piece; the tempo feels like a galant dance movement. The entire fugue imbues a festive environment and with a grand concert-style. There were constant moving sixteenth-notes patterns and sequences in the subject and episodes adding to the playful character. The ornamentations are inverted mordents in the subject and apply to all other voices. Overall, this piece masterfully demonstrates the fugal structure.

**Prelude and Fugue in c minor, from Book II of the Well-Tempered Clavier, BWV  
871, by Johann Sebastian Bach**

The C Minor prelude and fugue were composed fairly early on for the second part of the WTC. The piece is built upon a sixteenth-note rhythmic pattern, with migrating scales. The eighth-note pattern accompaniment presents a free toccata style which gives an upbeat mood. It also has cadences which construct a binary Italian Sonata form developed in the middle of seventeenth century. Bach added inverted double counterpoint throughout the piece and expanded larger intervals in the movement. This compositional production gives the fugue a technical-practice feel more so than a dance.

The fugue is a four-voice structure with the first three voices appearing early and the last voice comes at the point in which two-thirds of the piece has been played. A fifth voice is added at the end of the piece, which makes the final climax more majestic and dramatic. Bach used augmentation in this piece which creates casualness to the improvisation, this is known as *partimento*.

## **Piano Sonata No. 24 in F-sharp Major, Op. 78**

**Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770-1827)**

Opus seventy-eight was composed in 1809 after Beethoven took a few years pause in composition after the completion of the twenty-third Sonata *Appassionata* in 1804. It is the first work Beethoven composed during his middle period (1802-1815). Other piano sonatas published during this period are Op. 79, Op. 81a, and Op. 90. Beethoven dedicated this piece to Countess Thérèse von Brunswick, one of his students from the member of Hungarian nobility; this work is nicknamed “à Thérèse” by Beethoven.

The middle period sonatas were shorter regarding the duration of the pieces compared to the sonatas both in the early and late periods. In this work there are two movements with double bar repeats. The character of the middle period sonatas contain lyrical and highly cantabile themes, they lack the middle movement Minuets or Scherzos, which was generally inserted as the second or third movement in Beethoven’s sonatas before the finale.

The first movement begins with a four-bar introduction with tempo indication *Andante Cantabile*. The ascending harmonic progression expresses the intimate, peaceful, a tranquil tone. The exposition *Allegro, ma non troppo* unfolds into a lyrical passage. The moving sixteenth notes and the emphatic three-chord motif in the exposition brings a tenderness and sweetness to the sound. In the development, it modulates to f-sharp minor but retains the lyrically and melodic line. The development in Op. 78 is short and brief but comprises sensitive and fluent harmonious. In the recapitulation the three-chord motif appears again with more dramatic contrast of dynamics. Several spots are marked

*sforzando*. Specifically the last of the three chords which approach the end both the exposition and recapitulation. The main theme is recalled in the coda section with smooth sixteenth-note runs in the left hand. The music concludes the movement with four hugely contrasting dynamic f-sharp repeated *forte* chords which is a signature compositional trait of Beethoven.

The second movement marked *Allegro Vivace* immediately brings a completely different musical expression about. Sixteenth-note slurs build many sequences of appoggiaturas that run both ascending and descending from the lower to higher register throughout the piece. This compositional style shows hints of the unconventional characteristics of Beethoven's later sonatas. Several places harmonically shift quickly between major and minor keys, as well as rapidly contrasting between *pianissimo* to *fortissimo*. This beckons performer to deliver the entertaining and humorous side of the second movement to the audience. The coda section has one bar of ascending, arpeggiated sixteenth-note quintuplets, and it ends with a grand perfect authentic cadence.

## **Six Klavierstücke, Op. 118**

**Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)**

Together with Bach and Beethoven the composer Johannes Brahms is exalted as one of the famous “Three Bs” of classical music. He was one of the great composers during the Romantic period and was immediately recognized as a genius when he first met with Robert Schumann the renowned composer and pianist. Brahms soon built a close friendship with Schumann and his wife Clara, who also was a fine and gifted pianist and composer. Brahms composed symphonies, concerti, solo piano works, choral works, and several chamber music and his compositional style was largely influenced by Classical era composers such as Beethoven, Haydn, and Mozart and J.S. Bach. *Six Klavierstücke*, Op. 118, was one of his late compositions written for solo piano and it was completed in 1893 and premiered together with the Op. 119 which is the last solo piano work by Brahms.

Brahms dedicated Op. 118 to Clara Schumann and it includes six character pieces. Character pieces were commonly composed and were essential during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and intended to evoke the expressive title or the idea of each piece. There are total of four Intermezzos, one Ballade, and one Romanze in Op. 118. All of these pieces except for No. 1 Intermezzo are conventionally written in a straightforward A-B-A ternary form, which is a common musical form used in character pieces. Op. 118 expresses the intimacy and distinctive character richly, and each piece is a resourceful model of the compositional economy.

No. 1 *Intermezzo* in A-Minor begins with a passionate passage constructed with octaves and broken arpeggios as an accompaniment. The lyrical melodic line moves

within certain freedoms and the variety of the harmonic progression well narrates the piece. The coda is composed with a simple ascending arpeggio, and the piece ends with a pure a-major chord.

No. 2 *Intermezzo* in A-Major is the most popular piece out of the six pieces and is commonly performed. The melody and the complex changes of the chords reflect the reminiscent character of the piece. The contrapuntal lines and the inner voice richly express the sentimental and tender sound, and this piece shows the sensitivity of Brahms writing on polyphonic texture.

No. 3 *Ballade*, which was originally titled Rhapsody, is written in G-Minor and also contains a density of the chord progression. The piece unfolds with a grand opening reminiscent of orchestral music with the left-hand accompaniment imitating the sound the pizzicato, which supports the tempo indication “*energico*” of the piece. The middle section transitions into B-Major with a delightful and smooth musical flow, where the top melodic line is imitative to the sound of an oboe. There is a four-bar preparation going into the A section, and the piece fades away with the perfect authentic cadence.

No. 4 *Intermezzo* in F-Minor demonstrates more compositional traits of Brahms. The rhythmic pattern is mostly two against three based, with a few spots of hemiola patterns constructed with broken 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> intervals in the A section. Both hands maintain a canonic idea in the piece, and the dynamic stretch brings an agitated feeling. The middle section gives a major contrast on the dynamics. It is marked *dolce* and *pianissimo* throughout the section, and still in the form of canon. Later when it returns to A section, it achieves the climax of the piece with a bit of furious and emotional mood, but ends on F-Major chord at the end.

No. 5 *Romanze* in F-Major, along with the *Ballade*, is the only title Brahms put in the entire series of Op. 116-Op.119. Again, Brahms's intelligence with polyphonic writing skills makes the piece sound charming, beautiful, and with full of personal expressions. The top notes of the both hands bring out the lyrical, and singing melody. The middle section is even more lyrical and opens up with a gracious sound of the melody. With the steady and repeated bass figure, the theme of the section does not change but varies from eighth-note figure to triplet figuration, and finally to sixteenth-note figures. This piece illustrates the simplicity yet is tender and is a type of music that speaks about love.

The mood flips rapidly after the end of the *Romanze* by one single note of g-flat in No. 6 *Intermezzo* in E-flat Minor. This piece conveys the mysterious dark setting due to the complex harmonic progressions, the melodic direction, the overall dynamics, and the moving accompaniment, which are broken diminished arpeggios. The middle part seems to see a little hope as it changes to the relative G-flat-Major with a marching motif. The interaction between the two hands slowly builds the layers of the dynamics, and finally, reaches the climax with a majestic and cheerful tone and then fades away as it goes back to the A section. The entire piece ends with an E-flat broken arpeggio, and each single note is played with a sense of heaviness and tragic expression.

## **Piano Sonata No. 4 in c-minor, Op. 29**

**Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)**

Sergei Prokofiev was a Russian composer, pianist, and conductor and in his day his music was considered avant-garde; he is truly now recognized as one of the major composers of the twentieth century. Prokofiev's first piano teacher was his mother who nurtured his musical gifts at an early age. He had traveled to the United States and Europe for musical engagements after he finished his study at the St. Petersburg Conservatory and resided back in Soviet Russia when in 1936 for the remainder of his life. His compositional style matured and evolved significantly over his creative stages in his life. His musical tastes also ranged distinctively. He turned later in his life to what became his biggest interest and passion, opera.

*Piano Sonata No.4 in c-minor, Op. 29*, is one of the five piano sonatas written in the early to middle period. It took Prokofiev ten years to complete the sonata in 1917, and performed himself the next year. This sonata, along with *Sonata No.2 in d-minor* are dedicated to one of his friends in the Conservatory, Maximilian Schmidhof, who committed suicide in 1913. Prokofiev indicated various characters in each movement of this sonata, and guided the performers on, with instructions for emoting different moods while performing each movement.

The first movement *Allegro molto sostenuto* unfolds into mysterious and spooky aura from the lower register of the piano. Prokofiev inserts hemiolas quite frequently in the first movement which echoes another composer who also largely used this compositional technique, Johannes Brahms. The piece features a Neo-Baroque musical elements with several unexpected harmonies followed by clear cadences in between

sections. There is almost always a certain type of pause before the music transits into another section in Prokofiev's sonata. The dynamic markings are indicated by the composer straightforwardly for the purpose of creating the contrast he wants. The themes shift the dark and fairy-tale sort of mood and the piece ends with two eighth-note C-Minor chords with the "false notes."

Similarly in the second movement, *Andante Assai*, it starts from the lower register with a repeated eighth-note-interval pattern on the left hand and further project the serious feeling in the beginning. Its musical form is a combination of variations, ternary form, or sonata form where the development is missing. The chromatic elements along with inner voice could easily be heard in the themes. After the second variation, a loud and sudden sonority leads the change of the mood. In the middle section, a lyrical melody on the "white-keys" expresses a completely opposite tone after the loud interruption from the previous section. In the coda, there are two thematic melodies happen simultaneously within the eighth-note and triplet patterns.

The whole piece gets blown away by the third movement, *Allegro con brio—Ma Non Leggiero*, with a rapid run of a scale passage. The movement is spirited and exciting. The Alberti bass accompaniment recalled the typical Mozart's accompaniment style and the melody is filled with dissonances and leaps. It is in sonata-rondo form, which also commonly used in the Classical era. The middle section brings the audience to a different nature by hearing a lyrical, hopeful melodic texture in the higher register. The first theme appears again after four false scalar runs, and the excitement of the piece continues with a triumph, outrageous, and orchestral sonorities, and then finally ends with a grand c-minor dissonant chord.

## **Piano Concerto No. 20 in d minor, K. 466**

### **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)**

The Piano Concerto No. 20 in d-minor is one of the two concertos Mozart wrote in minor key out of total of twenty-seven concertos in 1785. Mozart's passion and devotion of writing concertos is similar to Beethoven's enthusiasm towards the piano sonatas. This concerto is as far the most historically popular among his keyboard concertos. This music is generally written in dark and impassioned theme and combined with a calm, peaceful, and lyrical second movement. Mozart never composed a cadenza for this concerto; however, several later composers had written one for it, ranging from Classical period (Beethoven), to twentieth century (Bartok) and extending to jazz version by Gershwin.

The opening ritornello in the first movement *Allegro* begins with *piano*, with syncopation in the string sections. The triplets in the opening slides in the celli section which creates a frightening, subtle sound and then thunders with a *forte* transformation. The solo's entrance starts with *piano* rather than *forte* in other concertos. The second theme is in relative F-Major and it unfolds the interaction between the solo part and the orchestra. The first movement closes with *piano*, after the cadenza is played by the performer, on which Beethoven's version which has a dramatic emphasis is selected in this performance.

The second movement *Romance*, is in contrast to the tragic theme in the first movement. There is not a clear tempo indication but in *alla breve*. This movement is very lyrical and holds a relief from the tension of the previous movement. It carries a romantic and flowing opening by the solo section. The middle section is in an interruptive and

sudden shift of g-minor which brings back the tension and the dramatic moment. After a turbulent type of the development, the recapitulation comes back to F-Major and remains calmly until the end of the piece.

The last movement *Allegro assai* is written in the form of rondo theme. It is the most dramatic and agitated movement of this concerto. It intensifies with the fast moving melody, and builds up the excitement as the soloist and orchestra alternate the role. The tension continues throughout the piece, and Beethoven gives even more drama and dynamic contrasts in his cadenza. Mozart surprised the audience in the coda section by modulating the key to parallel D-Major and the whole concerto with a tragic and depressing feeling is wrapped up with an upbeat and joyful ending.

# Program I (Concerto)

California State University, Northridge  
Mike Curb College of Arts, Media, and Communication  
Department of Music

## Program

Presents  
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**Wen Pei, Doris, Wang, Piano**

In her Master of Music Concerto Recital

A Student of Professor John Perry

Accompanied by Alexander Agate

December 8th, 2015  
4:30pm

Cypress Hall 158

*In partial fulfillment of the Master of Music degree  
in Piano Performance*

Piano Concerto No.20 in D minor, K. 466

.....Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
(1719-1787)

- I. Allegro
- II. Romance
- III. Allegro assai

# Program II (Solo Recital)

Department of Music

Presents

## Wen Pei, Doris, Wang

In her Master of Music recital

A student of John Perry

Saturday, April 22nd, 2017  
7:30 p.m.  
Cypress Recital Hall  
California State University Northridge

In partial fulfillment of a Master of Music in Piano Performance



## Program

Well-Tempered Clavier Book II      **Johann Sebastian Bach** (1685-1750)

*Prelude and Fugue No. 1 in C major, BWV 870*  
*Prelude and Fugue No. 2 in C minor, BWV 871*

6 Klavierstücke, Op. 118      **Johannes Brahms** (1833-1897)

*Intermezzo in A minor - Allegro non assai, ma molto appassionato*  
*Intermezzo in A major - Andante temperamente*  
*Ballade in G minor - Allegro energico*  
*Intermezzo in F minor - Allegretto un poco agitato*  
*Romanze in F major - Andante, Allegretto grazioso*  
*Intermezzo in E-flat minor - Andante, Largo e mesto*

### Intermission

Sonata in F-sharp major, Op. 78      **Ludwig van Beethoven** (1770-1827)

*I. Adagio cantabile - Allegro ma non troppo*  
*II. Allegro vivace*

Sonata No. 4 in C minor, Op. 29      **Sergei Prokofiev** (1891-1953)

*I. Allegro molto sostenuto*  
*II. Andante assai*  
*III. Allegro con brio, ma non leggiero*

## Thank you...🎵🎶

- *"For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever!" - Romans 11:36*
- **My family** - For your love and support from Taiwan. I love you mom, dad, and my dear sister
- **Mr. and Mrs. Perry** - For your wonderful inspiration, patience, and the knowledge of music that influenced me greatly
- **Dr. Rachmanov and Maria** - I would not have had the chance to be on stage without your encouragement a few years ago, thank you for all of your musical inspiration and the opportunity, and for our friendship
- **Dr. Lee and Prof. Francis** - For your teaching, coaching, and wonderful knowledge
- **Dr. Howard** - For all the harmony classes your taught in my undergrad years; for being such a good support and listener
- **Thomas Lovasz** - For making my memory at CSUN so special and blessed; for your love and support; for being my love and my best friend
- **Ginny Chen** - For your constant support and being my bff in the US
- **4 Flowers Studio** - You guys are all amazing and thank you for the support and sharing laughter together :)
- **Catherine** - For being my usher and the supportive meimei ☺
- **Piano Department** - For participating and celebrating the moment with me
- **The Audience** - I sincerely thank each one of you that made it to my recital and share this time with me. It means a lot to me

Reception to follow in CY101