CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

RECTIAL AND CONCERTO WORKS
BY BRAHMS, RACHMANINOFF, SCHUBERT, AND SCHUMANN

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Music
in Music, Performance

By

Chi Zhang

December 2015
A graduate project of Chi Zhang is approved:

Professor John Perry
Date

Dr. Liviu Marinescu
Date

Dr. Dmitry Rachmanov. Chair
Date

California State University, Northridge
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signature Page</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program I (Concerto)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program II (Solo Recital)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

RECITAL AND CONCERTO WORKS

BY BRAHMS, RACHMANINOFF, SCHUBERT, AND SCHUMANN

By

Chi Zhang

Master of Music in Piano Performance

8 Klavierstücke, Op.76 by Johannes Brahms

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897), a great romantic German pianist and composer was born in Hamburg and passed away in Vienna. Regarded with the same renown as two of the greatest German composers, Bach and Beethoven, his music is rooted within the old German school, but he experimented with and developed further the classical harmonic language. His piano pieces are well recognizable by their ambiguous harmonies and forms, unexpected key changes, complex rhythm and texture, etc. Another important inspiration to Brahms’ music was his friendship with Robert Schumann and Clara Schumann.

During Brahms’ early period of composition, his colleagues tended to compose “character pieces”, but Brahms still followed the principles of old genres such as the piano sonata, and variations. However, after the Paganini variations, (Op.35 in 1863), Brahms quit composing large-scale solo works for piano. Instead, he concentrated his artistic talent, maturity, and sophisticated composing collections of smaller works, such as the works Op.76, Op.79, Op.116, Op.117, Op118. And Op.119. 8 Klavierstücke, Op.76, composed in
1878, is the first set of the miniature masterpieces. This set of pieces comprises four intermezzi and four capriccios.

I. Capriccio in F-sharp Minor

Ternary form. Pattern of continuous sixteenth note suggests a sense of undercurrent, which is a typical feature of Brahms’s music.

II. Capriccio in B Minor

Rondo form (A-B-A’-C-B-A). Although based in the key of B minor, the lively rhythm and staccato illustrate a sense of humor and enjoyment.

III. Intermezzo in A-flat Major

Binary form. The music presents a scene of a tranquil night when the clear and bright moonlight reflects on the surface of a lake. The light arpeggio indicates the small ripple.

IV. Intermezzo in B-flat Major

Rounded binary form. The unstable rhythm keeps pushing forward and pulling back, which is another apparent musical style of Brahms.

V. Capriccio in C-sharp Minor

Variation rondo form. In this piece, Brahms experimented with complex rhythm. The rhythm of hemiola and hocket bring a huge impact on people’s hearing. The alternation between the meter of 6/8 and 2/4 breaks the regular form.

VI. Intermezzo in A Major

Ternary form. The A section is developed on a pattern of two against three, which a start on the upbeat. In B section, the two lines (the triplets and eight notes) reverses, creating a more beautiful and touching melody.
VII. Intermezzo in A Minor

Rounded binary form. The most sentimental one in this set. With the slow progression of chords, the introduction part immediately leads the listener to the composer’s narrative. The first theme lingers on the dominant note, illustrating and unanswered questions. The short second theme develops from the materials in the first theme, in which the composer tries to find the answer himself. Shortly he gives up so that the music returns to the endless questions. The coda repeats the introduction, nevertheless, with only desperation.

VIII. Capriccio in C Major

Ternary form. All the depression bursts out at the last piece. Due to its non-stop modulation, the key is tremendously ambiguous. Until the last chord does the key settle down on C major.

Piano Concerto No.2 in C minor Op.18 by Sergei Rachmaninoff

Sergei Rachmaninoff, born in 1873, was widely recognized as the last great romantic Russian composer. Rachmaninoff received his education at St. Peterburg conservatory and Moscow conservatory in his early life. He left Russia with his family in 1914 due to Russia’s unstable societal order after the outbreak of war and never returned to his motherland, although a strong sense of nostalgia remained with him throughout his life. He and his family toured in Europe and arrived in America in 1918.

Rachmaninoff’s music is well-known for its nationalistic style, lyrical and poetic characters, and virtuosic piano techniques. In other words, his music combines piano virtuosity and the Russian tendency towards melancholy. Undoubtedly one of his
representative compositions, the second piano concerto illustrates Rachmaninoff’s propensity towards the aforementioned traits.

Before composing his second piano concerto, Rachmaninoff received psychological treatment after the failed debut of his first symphony left him depressed. The successful premiere of his second piano concerto in 1901 returned Rachmaninoff’s confidence and allowed him to overcome his emotional crisis.

The composition is scored for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets in B-flat and A, 2 bassoons, 2 horns in F, 2 trumpets in B-flat, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, strings and a solo piano. The masterful balance between the solo piano part and the orchestra is one of the aspects that makes this concerto extraordinary. Reminiscent of symphonic writing, Rachmaninoff’s piano concerto distances itself from other piano concertos in which the orchestra part plays a subservient role to the soloist or lacks the careful orchestration by striking a careful balance between soloist and orchestra.

This work consists of three movements. However the movements were not composed chronologically; the third movement was composed first, and then the second movement. After the premiere of these two movements in 1900, Rachmaninoff completed the first movement and finished the concerto. The reversed order of composition aids in the explanation of the similarity in the themes throughout the three movements.

I. Moderato (C minor)

Sonata form. Starting with solo piano, the eight-bar introduction is presented by a progression of dark and heavy chords. Then the orchestra states the grand and seamless first theme. Soon after, the lyrical and pastoral second theme in E-flat major comes is introduced solo piano. The development section alternates between the solo piano and the
orchestra and leads to a climax and subsequent entrance of the recapitulation, where the
first theme turns to a passionate march. Immediately, the solo piano takes over the second
theme with a gloomier mood from a short introduction by the orchestra. At last, the piano
and orchestra rear up to a forte ending.

II. Adagio sostenuto--Più animato--Adagio sostenuto (E major)

Ternary form. The solemn and fantastic A section is demonstrated by clarinet, piano,
and strings respectively. The B section is led by piano and transposed into diverse keys,
accelerating to a cadenza-like passage. After a brief recapitulation comes a dreamlike coda
with a string melody and full chords from the piano. The coda is the most beautiful part in
the whole concerto in my own opinion.

III. Allegro scherzando (C minor--C major)

Sonata rondo form (A-B-A’-B’-A”-B”). Arriving with a stormy introduction, the
agitated first theme is suggested by solo piano. In contrast to the first theme, the typical
Russian melodic line is applied in B-flat major and alternates between orchestra and piano.
Then the material from first theme is developed constantly and the second theme occurs in
D-flat major. To conclude the movement, the first theme is restated in the winds and the
whole orchestra reaches the climax of the movement with the second theme in C major,
following with a tutti coda.

Piano Sonata in C minor, D958 by Franz Schubert

Franz Schubert (1797-1828), an Austrian composer, was regarded as the last master
of the classical era and also the pioneer of the romantic period. Growing up in a
non-aristocratic family, Schubert received his formative musical education from his
family and seminary. Schubert’s talent intrigued the composer Antonio Salieri, with whom Schubert studied with for a long time. To support himself, young Schubert taught lessons while he studied. Unfortunately, in contrast to the other composers of the period, most of Schubert’s performances were among close friends rather than in public. Due to his lack of public performance Schubert found his financial situation unsteady and reliant upon patronage. Not until 1828, the year he died, did he have a public recital of his own compositions. After his death, Schubert was buried next to the tomb of his idol, Beethoven.

Unlike Beethoven’s explosive bursts of expression, Schubert’s music expresses emotions more subtly. In Schubert’s music, fluency and lyricism always maintain prominence above other features. Although art songs make up the majority of Schubert’s contribution to music, Schubert’s piano sonatas, in particular the last three, are comparable to Beethoven’s great sonatas, with regards to artistry, difficulty, and introspection. The piano sonata in C minor, D958, completed in 1928, is the first one of his last three grand piano sonatas. This piece comprises four movements.

I. Allegro

Sonata form. The first theme starts on C minor chords with a vigorous rhythm. Presented after a breathtaking rest, the E-flat major second theme introduces a feminine lyrical line in contrast to the masculine first theme. Instead of returning to C minor at the end of the exposition, the music transitions into A-flat major and continues developing. In the recapitulation section, the second theme modulates to C major and the movement remains there until the coda returns to C minor.
II. Adagio

Rondo form (A-B-A’-B’-A’’). In contrast to the majestic first movement, the second movement presents a sorrowful narration. The calm A theme, full of memory and story contrasts the rhythmically slow and heavy B theme.

III. Menuetto & Trio

Ternary form. The first section is a rounded binary form. It presents a nymphish and skittish character. The Menuetto ends hesitantly with playfully placed whole rests. The trio section is also a rounded binary form. The key modulates from A-flat major, E-flat major, E-flat minor, G-flat major, to A-flat major.

IV. Allegro

Sonata Rondo form (A-B-C-D-A’-B’-A’’). The whole movement is based on a rhythm of Tarantella. The abundant materials, complex modulations, and extensive size makes the last movement a great challenge for the performer.

Kinderszenen, Op.15 by Robert Schumann

Robert Schumann (1810-1856), born in Zwickau, was a romantic German composer and music critic. At first, Schumann majored in Law at a school in Leipzig in accordance to his mother’s wishes. Soon, under the impact of the inspiring musical atmosphere within Leipzig and great musicians such as Paganini, Schumann decided to devote himself to music. However, because due to radical methods of practicing, Schumann injured his hand permanently. Hence, he threw his focus upon composing and working as a music critic. In 1834, Schumann founded a publication, Neue Zeitschrift für Musik (New Journal for
Music), wherein he proposed his musical ideas. Throughout his life Schumann suffered from mental disorders and eventually found himself committed to a mental asylum.

As a composer, due to his study and research on Bach’s music, Schumann excelled at counterpoint and fugal writing. To some extent, Schumann was a successor of Bach’s. As far as I am concerned, Schumann’s music is tremendously sensitive, subtle, and fantastic.

Schumann’s piano works hold particular esteem among his compositions. The pieces from Op.1 to Op.23 are all written for piano. Kinderszenen Op.15 was completed in 1838. The piece illustrates an adult’s reminiscence upon his childhood. There are thirteen pieces in this set. Although not strictly variation form, there are common attributes between the pieces. Interestingly, the whole set starts with a piece in G major and ends with a piece in G major, with most of the neighboring pieces forming tonic-dominant relationships contributing to the work’s cohesive feeling.

1. Von fremden Ländern und Menschen (Of Foreign Lands and Peoples)

   The set was composed in France. The dotted rhythm in the higher voice, accompanied by the Waltz arpeggio in the inner voice, executes a three against four polyrhythm.

2. Kuriose Geschichte (A Curious Story)

   Two contrasting themes alternate, which aids in the feeling of telling a dramatic story to kids.

3. Hasche-Mann (Blind Man’s Bluff)

   The running staccato notes present a scene of inexhaustible fun.
4. Bittendes Kind (Pleading Child)

Each short and soft haunting melodic line is repeated twice with great care. The music ends on the seventh scale degree of the dominant seventh chord, leaving the listener with the feeling of hopes unanswered.

5. Glückes genug (Happy Enough)

The bright melody, accompanied with a syncopation in left hand, depicts the pure happiness of a child.

6. Wichtige Begebenheit (An Important Event)

A pedestrian rhythm and staccatos on quarter notes convey a child’s attempt at regal behavior, with a sense of slight humor.

7. Träumerei (Dreaming)

The most famous and charming piece. It is in a rounded binary form. The subtle changes of harmony lure people into a dreamlike world.

8. Am Kamin (At the Fireside)

The warm and smooth melody suggests a happy and auspicious atmosphere.

9. Ritter vom Steckenpferd (Knight of the Hobbyhorse)

The consistent rhythm of syncopation indicates an exciting knight riding on the hobbyhorse.

10. Fast zu ernst (Almost Too Serious)

The overlapping melody lines illustrate a child who deep contemplation.

11. Fürchtenmachen (Frightening)

The first theme establishes an atmosphere of horror while the second theme imitates a child’s panic.
12. **Kind im Einschlummern (Child Falling Asleep)**

   The jiggly rhythm and use of Canon indicates a sense of lullaby. The modulation in the middle section adds plenty of colors to the dream.

13. **Der Dichter spricht (The Poet Speaks)**

   Simple progress of four-part harmony seems a conversation between sagacious philosophers who conclude the principle of all things in the most brief words.
PROGRAM I
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE
MIKE CURB COLLEGE OF ARTS, MEDIA, AND COMMUNICATION
MUSIC DEPARTMENT
PRESENT

CHI ZHANG
A student of Professor John Perry
In his Master of Music Recital*
Second piano by Charles Parsons
Sunday, April 27, 2014, 7:30pm
Nordhoff Hall Room 107

PROGRAM

Piano Concerto No.2 in C minor, Op.18-----------------------------Sergei Rachmaninoff
(1873--1943)

I. Moderato
II. Adagio sostenuto--Più Animato-- Adagio sostenuto
III. Allegro scherzando

*In partial fulfillment of the Master of Music in piano performance
PROGRAM II

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE
MIKE CURB COLLEGE OF ARTS, MEDIA, AND COMMUNICATION
MUSIC DEPARTMENT
PRESENT

CHI ZHANG

A student of Professor John Perry

In his Master of Music Recital*

Saturday, April 25, 2015, 7:30pm

Cypress Recital Hall

PROGRAM

Kinderszenen, Op.15-----------------------------------------------Robert Schumann
(1810-1856)

8 Klavierstücke, Op.76---------------------------------------------Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

INTERMISSION

Sonata in C minor, D95---------------------------------------------Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)

I. Allegro

II. Adagio

III. Menuetto & Trio

IV. Allegro

*In partial fulfillment of the Master of Music in piano performance