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CHOPIN
SOCIETY

2021-2022 **SEASON**

MUSIC GIVES SOUL TO
THE UNIVERSE

JAKUB **KUSZLIK**

Tuesday, April 5, 2022

7:30 PM Vancouver Playhouse

ERIC **LU**

Sunday, May 22, 2022

3 PM Vancouver Playhouse

MESSAGE FROM OUR ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

We end our season with the Vancouver debut of young Polish pianist, Jakub Kuszlik. As well, we are delighted that we are able to bring back to the Vancouver Playhouse pianist Eric Lu, whose Vancouver concert had to be cancelled in 2020.

As always, we strive to present performances by seasoned concert artists as well as outstanding musicians who are at the outset of their artistic journey and musical career. We are confident that you will be moved by the musicianship and pianism of our artists.

The VCS aims to promote cultural interaction among the people of Vancouver, who come from a rich variety of ethnic backgrounds, and to emphasize the importance of music in our lives. We have chosen to name our Society after the Polish composer Frederic Chopin because of the universal appeal of his music and his world-wide reputation as one of the greatest composers for the keyboard.

The VCS is a member of the International Federation of Chopin Societies, based in Vienna. This connection puts us in touch with some fifty other Chopin Societies worldwide, creating exciting possibilities for inviting international musicians to Vancouver.

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JAKUB KUSZLIK

7 Fantasie Op. 116

1. Capriccio in D minor
2. Intermezzo in A minor
3. Capriccio in G minor
4. Intermezzo in E major
5. Intermezzo in E minor
6. Intermezzo in E major
7. Capriccio in D minor

BRAHMS

4 Klavierstücke Op. 119

1. Intermezzo in B minor
2. Intermezzo in E minor
3. Intermezzo in C major
4. Rhapsody in E-flat major

Intermission

Fantasy in F minor, Op. 49

4 Mazurkas Op. 30

1. Mazurka in C minor, No. 1
2. Mazurka in B minor, No. 2
3. Mazurka in D-flat major, No. 3
4. Mazurka in C-sharp minor, No. 4

CHOPIN

Scherzo in C-sharp minor, Op. 39

*We acknowledge the financial support of
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NOTES

Brahms: 7 Fantasies, Op. 116

Capriccio in D minor, Presto energico

Intermezzo in A minor, Andante

Capriccio in G minor, Allegro passionato

Intermezzo in E major, Adagio

Intermezzo in E minor, Andante con grazia ed intimissimo sentimento

Intermezzo in E major, Andante teneramente

Capriccio in D minor, Allegro agitato

The pieces of Opuses 116 and 119 are late works, written 1892-93 as Brahms's lifelong friend Clara Schumann struggled with pain and illness. Brahms turned 60 and Clara became 74 in this period; she could only play the piano for short periods of time now, and that was surely one reason for his interest in short character pieces. He sent about twenty piano miniatures to her as he finished them, and she responded with gratitude. These would be his last works for solo piano, each one a polished gem. Complex motivic relationships, creative harmonies and contrapuntal voice leading can be discovered in all of them.

There are three energetic Capriccios in Op. 116, including the first and last pieces of the set, full of passion and all in minor keys. The Intermezzos are gentler and quieter, by turns wistful, sweet, sad, mysterious and tender. Most of the movements are in ABA form, with B sections carrying motives from A and repetitions continuously varied. Cross-rhythms, hemiola and irregular phrase groups keep challenging the rhythm patterns indicated by the time signature.

Brahms: 4 Klavierstücke, Op. 119

Intermezzo in B minor, Adagio

Intermezzo in E minor, Andantino un poco agitato

Intermezzo in C major, Grazioso e giocoso

Rhapsody in E-flat major, Allegro risoluto

Upon receiving this B minor Intermezzo, Clara wrote back to Brahms, *"You must have known how enthusiastic I should be when you were copying out that bittersweet piece which, for all its discords, is so wonderful. No, one actually revels in the discords, and, when playing them, wonders how the composer ever brought them to birth. Thank you for this new, magnificent gift."*

The E minor Intermezzo contrasts the somewhat agitated opening with a serene Viennese waltz in E major in its middle section; those paying attention might notice that both sections are based on the same melodic idea. The most cheerful piece of the set, the C major Intermezzo places the melody in a middle voice. As a finale, Brahms wrote a grand Hungarian-style Rhapsody which begins in E-flat major and passes through a strumming episode in A-flat major. The coda does not lose the heroic quality but it is tinged with darkness, ending in E-flat minor.

Chopin: Fantasy in F Minor, Op. 49

"Today I finished the Fantasy--the weather is lovely but I am sad at heart, not that it matters," Chopin wrote on Oct. 29, 1841. The name Fantasy implies rich romantic expressiveness and the character of an improvisation. One of the pinnacles of Chopin's musical output, the construction of this piece is innovative, contrasting improvisatory elements within a highly structured form expanding on sonata. Themes pass through keys separated by a rising third, travelling from F minor up through five themes in ten keys to the A-flat major coda.

The long introduction begins with the inexorable dotted rhythms of a rather ominous march which references nationalistic Polish tunes. A sequence of ideas follows, lyric, epic, or dramatic, weaving a tale of national tragedy, full of passion. The center of the Fantasy occurs outside the turmoil in the distant key of B major, a calm hymn-like theme like a luminous ray of hope. Soon we are plunged back into the action, as the sequence of themes returns to work its way toward triumphant A-flat major. The coda has a recitative-like reference to the mid-section hymn and a final grand crescendo.

Chopin: Mazurkas, Op. 30

Mazurka in C minor

Mazurka in B minor

Mazurka in D-flat major

Mazurka in C-sharp minor

The Mazurkas of Op. 30 were written in Paris in 1837, around the time Chopin's relationship with Aurore Dudevant, the novelist known as George Sand, was beginning. These Mazurkas still show elements of the energetic folk and salon models in such things as dotted rhythms, ornaments and use of ostinato, but now often have nostalgic moods and interesting harmonic experiments. The poignant opening dance is the most straight forward of the set, with clear ABA form.

BIOGRAPHY

The B minor Mazurka contrasts quiet and loud phrases, and its unusual form (ABCB) results in the piece ending in the dominant key, F sharp minor. The C section repeats a simple melodic phrase 8 times, while varying the harmonies below.

After an opening fanfare, the Mazurka in D-flat major contrasts exuberant calling phrases in the major with subdued responses in the parallel minor. The C-sharp minor Mazurka is longer and more complex, beginning quietly and dying away at the end. Strumming left-hand pedal chords and imaginative right-hand ornaments enliven the main theme. Near the end is a famous row of parallel 7th chords, sliding chromatically down into the final bars, a harmonic technique considered experimental in Debussy's time.

Chopin, Scherzo in C-sharp minor, Op. 39

This is the third of Chopin's four scherzos, written during his cold and rainy holiday on the usually sunny island of Majorca. Marked Presto con fuoco (Very fast with fire), we are quickly launched into the first theme, octaves pounding down the keyboard, anger or devilry at work. The middle is slower--the phrases of a hymn, like the singing of the monks they heard on Majorca, are interspersed with glistening showers of passage work. This idea returns after a recapitulation of the angry first theme creating an ABAB form. A whirlwind of coda builds to a dramatic climax with the final chords in C-sharp major.

Ruth Enns,

Vancouver Academy of Music

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Vancouver classical music information in one place

JAKUB KUSZLIK

TUESDAY, APRIL 5, 2022

7:30 pm Vancouver Playhouse



JAKUB KUSZLIK – award winner of some of today's most prestigious competitions – 4th Prize winner and The Polish Radio Prize for best performance of mazurkas – of the 18th Chopin Competition. He was also the second prize winner of the Ignacy Jan Paderewski International Piano Competition in Bydgoszcz and the Hilton Head International Piano Competition, and winner of the third prize in the 'Top of the World' International Competition in Tromsø.

He has performed extensively throughout Poland and internationally, including the United States, Japan, Vietnam, Germany, Italy, Greece, Norway and Iceland.

His piano repertoire is very extensive and diverse, although he has an affinity and a special affection for classical works.

In a review of the Chopin Competition, Jed Distler in The Gramophone wrote: *I've tended to focus on pianists whose particular character traits, talents and quirks (or lack thereof) readily manifest themselves. Consequently, several 'dark horses' have nearly escaped my attention, such as Jakub Kuszlik. I rewatched Kuszlik's second-stage performance and quickly realised just how seriously I had underestimated him. [...] Indeed, Kuszlik is so musical that you only notice his remarkable virtuosity after the fact. He was born to play Chopin.*



Eric Lu
Piano

ERIC LU

Arabeske in C major, Op. 18
Waldszenen , Op. 82
Theme and Variations in D minor,
Op. 18b Sonata K333

SCHUMANN

BRAHMS

Intermission

Tocatta in C minor, BWV 911
Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor, Op. 35

BACH
CHOPIN

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NOTES

Schumann: Arabeske, Op. 18

The great virtuoso Clara Wieck Schumann actively promoted her husband Robert's music throughout her life, but especially in her early career, she felt that the general public was not always ready for his ideas. In 1839, the year before their marriage, there is a record of Clara asking Robert to write something easily understandable, perhaps a Rondo, "not too long and not too short." This lovely Arabesque fulfills her request on all points.

Schumann: Waldszenen, Op. 82

Eintritt (Entry)

Jäger auf der Lauer (Hunters on the lookout)

Einsame Blumen (Lonely Flowers)

Verrufene Stelle (Haunted Place)

Freundliche Landschaft (Friendly Landscape)

Herberge (Wayside Inn)

Vogel als Prophet (Bird as Prophet)

Jagdlied (Hunting Song)

Abschied (Farewell)

In the last several years, many of us have found diversion and solace by walking in the woods; *Waldszenen* (Forest Scenes) is Schumann's musical walk in the woods circa 1850. Most of Schumann's piano music was written in the ten years before his marriage to Clara in 1840, but this cycle is later, from just a few years before he went to the asylum where he died in 1856. As in his earlier cycles such as *Carnaval* or *Scenes from Childhood*, there is a series of short movements, each presenting an image identified in the title.

Eintritt, the entrance to the forest, seems very pleasant, with birds twittering and fresh things to see wherever one looks. The second movement shows some excited hunters on the lookout—the tempo is very fast with startling changes of dynamics. *Lonely Flowers* are featured in the next image; two simple little melodies sing in the right hand, accompanied by a plucked bass. Next, we reach a *Haunted Place*, very quiet with creepy double-dotted rhythms and melodic fragments in many different parts of the keyboard. Here the composer includes a romantic bit of poetry by Hebbel:

The flowers that grow so high here are pale like death;
Only one, there in the center, stands dark red.
The color comes not from the sun: it never met its rays;
It come from the earth, which drank of human blood.

Friendly Landscape is the title of the fifth image, back in home key of B-flat major with a brisk tempo and a lilting tune. An inviting Wayside Inn appears, most welcome to the weary adventurer. A *Prophetic Bird* is depicted in image #7, perhaps the most celebrated piece from this cycle. Quick turns of the head and flicks of the feathers, as well as an eerie, all-knowing character are evoked in the fantastical swoops of the melody. It has a middle section that is warm and lyrical—the bird is a welcome sight. Next is a *Hunting Song* with plenty of horn calls, suggesting a grand adventure. The final movement, *Farewell*, is a song of thanks.

Brahms: Theme and Variations in D minor, Op. 18b

The String Sextet in B-flat Major which Brahms completed in 1860 was a landmark in his early maturity as a composer, written when he was in his late twenties. His friend Clara Schumann particularly admired the slow movement, a set of variations on a bass line and harmonic sequence, so Brahms transcribed it for solo piano for her birthday, dedicating it to her on the 13th of September that year. Rather grand and archaic in tone, its theme and the six variations that follow have the traditional baroque form of two 16-measure sections, with Variations 4 and 5 in D major. It is the depth and beauty of expression which make it extraordinary. Effects of its original scoring can often be discerned—for example, the melody of the opening is first played by viola and then passes to the violin, an octave higher.

J.S. Bach: Toccata in C minor, BWV 911

The toccata is a genre that dates back to the 1590s, when composers such as Giovanni Gabrieli wrote keyboard pieces with displays of virtuosity. Bach wrote seven large toccatas for harpsichord modeled on those of the North German composer Buxtehude, which alternate rhapsodic free sections with tightly constructed fugues. This C minor toccata is probably an early work, written while Bach was in his twenties. Its brilliant improvisatory opening leads to a thoughtful Adagio in four voices. A quick three-voice fugue based on a triadic subject is developed over several minutes, leading to a big cadence on the dominant. Then the fugue gets going again, this time combining the triadic first subject with a nimble second subject, creating an exciting double fugue which culminates with rhetorical flourishes.

BIOGRAPHY

Chopin: *Sonata #2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 35*

In 1839, Chopin spent his first summer at Nohant, the country home of Aurore Dudevant (better known by her pen name George Sand). It was in this relaxed atmosphere that he completed his B-flat minor sonata. He had written the iconic funeral march a couple of years earlier, and to it he added three sharply contrasted movements, an Allegro, a Scherzo and a short Finale.

Four bars of Grave introduction set a dark mood, and then the first theme enters with breathless urgency. The second theme is a calm, expansive melody in D-flat major. The development builds the opposition of these themes, rising to an exciting climax as the urgent first theme dominates. The recapitulation begins in B-flat major with the radiant second theme. A few rumblings of the first theme threaten near the end of the coda, but these are overcome by triumphant rising major chords.

The main idea of the Scherzo is fiery and grim. A quiet pool of lyricism is encountered in the middle section, but then it is back to the battle. A fragment of the beautiful melody returns at the close, like a wisp of memory. After these two movements of contrast and conflict, the Marche funèbre arrives as the heart of the sonata. Back in B-flat minor, the doleful left-hand ostinato and inexorable dotted rhythms seem inevitable. There is escape in the nostalgic middle section, but then the march returns. The last movement is brief and unusual, functioning as a postlude. Once described as "*night winds sweeping over the churchyard graves*," it is a perpetual motion with the hands always playing an octave apart.

Ruth Enns,

Vancouver Academy of Music

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Vancouver classical music information in one place

ERIC LU

SUNDAY, MAY 22, 2022

3 pm Vancouver Playhouse



Eric Lu won First Prize at The Leeds International Piano Competition in 2018 and made his BBC Proms debut with the Shanghai Symphony and Long Yu in summer 2019. He is currently a member of the BBC New Generation Artist scheme.

Highlights of the 2019/20 season include debuts with the BBC Symphony (at the Barbican with Alpesh Chauhan), Detroit Symphony (Eduardo Strausser), St Petersburg Philharmonic (Charles Dutoit) and Kansas City Symphony (Johannes Debuss); alongside returns to The Hallé (Jiří Rožněň), Warsaw Philharmonic (Niklas Willén) and Swedish Chamber Orchestra (Martin Fröst). He will also tour the U.K. with the Orchestre National de Lille (Alexandre Bloch), and give recitals at the Elbphilharmonie, Wigmore Hall, BOZAR, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Philharmonie Luxembourg and Gewandhaus Leipzig. The 2018/19 season saw Eric perform with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic (with Vasily Petrenko), Swedish Chamber Orchestra (Thomas Dausgaard), Singapore Symphony (Darío Alejandro Ntaca) and The Hallé (Sir Mark Elder and Tomáš Hanus); and give recitals at Muziekgebouw Eindhoven, LSO St Luke's, Seoul Arts Centre, Saint Petersburg Philharmonia, Shanghai Grand Theatre and Louis Vuitton Foundation Paris. Born in Massachusetts in 1997.

Eric Lu first came to international attention as a prize-winner at the 2015 Chopin International Competition in Warsaw aged just 17. He went on to win First Prize at the 2017 International German Piano Award and the 2015 US National Chopin Competition, and perform at Carnegie Hall, Alte Oper Frankfurt, Taipei National Concert Hall, Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre and the Auditorio Nacional Madrid. Eric's discography includes his prize-winning Chopin and Beethoven from The Leeds with The Hallé and Edward Gardner on Warner Classics, and a Mozart, Schubert and Brahms recital on Genuin Classics. He currently resides in Philadelphia where he attends the Curtis Institute of Music, studying with Jonathan Biss and Robert McDonald. He is also a pupil of Dang Thai Son.

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