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CHOPIN
SOCIETY

2023-2024 **SEASON**

WHERE WORDS FAIL
MUSIC SPEAKS

ALEXANDER **GAVRYLYUK**

Saturday, October 21, 2023

7:30 PM St. Andrews Wesley United Church

MESSAGE FROM OUR ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

We begin our season by welcoming back Lilya Zilberstein, an artist at the height of her powers. Few days later together with our friends at Early Music Vancouver, we will present fortepianist Melisande McNabney in recital.

Lastly, Alexander Gavrylyuk, whose performance of Rachmaninoff's second sonata still rings in our ears, will return to perform for us in October.

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 highlight the importance of great music in our lives. We named our Society after the Polish composer Frederic Chopin because of the universal appeal of his music and his acknowledged reputation as one of the greatest composers for the keyboard.

Our society 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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ALEXANDER GAVRYLYUK

Sonata No. 47 in B minor

HAYDN

Etude in E flat minor No. 6, Op. 10

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Etude in E Major, No. 3, Op. 10

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Fantasy in F minor, Op. 49

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Intermission

Pictures at an Exhibition

MUSSORGSKY

*We acknowledge the financial support of
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NOTES

Haydn: Sonata in B minor, No. 47, Hob. XVI:32

Haydn had spent about fifteen years working for the Esterhazy family and was in his mid-forties by the time he published this sonata as part of a set of six in 1776. The new fortepianos were becoming popular, but no doubt Haydn had in mind to write pieces that would also work on the older harpsichords and clavichords. Prince Nicholas had recently become interested in mounting productions of comic operas, and this sonata adopts the light-hearted tone and sense of witty banter of comic opera of the time. The first movement sounds like someone in a bad mood, stomping around, but still in elegant courtly dress. In the development the dotted rhythms get quite insistent, and the movement ends emphatically, without getting in a better mood. The Menuet in B major has a soothing feminine character, setting in relief the Trio which is back in B minor and still gruff and grumpy. The Finale, like the first movement, is in sonata form. There is a sense that things are going awry, with insistent repeated notes, descending octaves and whirling right-hand figurations, culminating in a strong ending low in B minor.

Chopin: Etude in E-flat minor, Op. 10, No. 6

Chopin: Etude in E major, Op. 10, No. 3

The twelve etudes of Opus 10 were written between 1829-32, when Chopin was a young man trying to find his place in the world, moving between Warsaw and Vienna before settling in Paris. They represent Chopin's music at its finest. Although they are in every sense didactic works designed to develop the technique of the player, they achieve this aim with such imagination and individuality that they established new ways of playing the piano. Etude No. 6 in E-flat minor requires careful balancing of voices to clarify the countermelodies accompanying the nocturne-like theme singing in the top voice. The third Etude in E major, nicknamed "Tristesse" (Sadness), has a beautiful slow melody framing an agitated middle section.

Chopin: Fantasy in F minor, Op. 49

Chopin completed this Fantasy in the summer of 1841 while living at the country estate of his partner, the Baroness Dudevant (better known by her pen name, George Sand). 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, arch-like form expanding on sonata. The long introduction begins with the inexorable dotted rhythms of an ominous march, referencing nationalistic Polish tunes. A sequence of ideas follows, alternately lyric, epic, or dramatic, weaving a tale of 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. But before we reach the end, a poignant recitative passage, Adagio and pianissimo, interrupts with references the mid-section hymn. The final measures crescendo into a cadence moving from D-flat minor to A-flat major, as if its sense of happy resolution is tainted with memories of past events.

Musorgsky: Pictures at an Exhibition

Musorgsky's friend, the artist, designer and architect Viktor Hartmann, died suddenly of a brain aneurysm at the age of 39. In 1874, the year after Hartmann's death, a large retrospective collection of his works was mounted in St. Petersburg, and in the heat of inspiration, in just three weeks following Musorgsky's visit to the gallery, this suite of ten movements came together, with each movement representing one of the works on display.

A Promenade in Russian 5/4 time is the first section we hear, and this recurs after movements 1, 2, 4, 6, 8 and in the finale, tying the work together, representing the visitor moving from one image to the next. "Gnomus" (The Gnome) is the first picture we stop at, showing a design for a nutcracker with large teeth and crooked legs; the music suggests the lurching gait of this mythical creature. After a brief walk, we reach a watercolour of an old Italian castle with a mournful troubadour, "The Old Castle," depicted in music with a lonely tune singing over a throbbing pedal tone. Next is an image of the Parisian garden of the Tuileries, including some quarreling youngsters; Musorgsky uses a familiar two-note phrase of children's taunting for this.

The fourth picture, called "Cattle," shows a Polish farm cart with big wheels drawn by lumbering oxen; an inexorable ostinato in the bass suggests the elemental power of the beasts of burden. "Ballet of Unhatched Chicks" is based on a sketch of a design for a ballet mounted at the Bolshoi Theatre featuring children dressed as canary chicks just emerging from their shells, already busy pecking.

Musorgsky owned two paintings by Hartmann, which he loaned to the gallery for the exhibition, portraits of two Polish Jews, one rich, the other

BIOGRAPHY

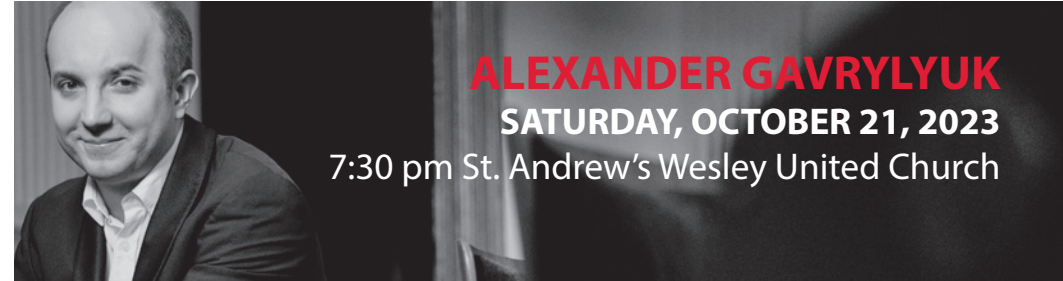
poor. The music of this section contrasts the proud pronouncements of the rich man with the pleading of the poor one, using the modal inflections of their traditional chant.

Back in France, we see the busy marketplace in Limoges with women gossiping and quarreling about the latest Great News. The eighth image is of Hartmann in a top hat exploring the gloomy catacombs (tombs) under the streets of Paris by the light of a lantern. This runs into a commentary with a Latin title, "With the Dead in a Dead Language," a solemn reworking of the Promenade theme.

Baba Yaga is a witch of Slavic folklore who lives in a hut that turns around on chicken legs. The show of Hartmann's work included his design for a bronze clock in the form of Baba Yaga's hut. Musorgsky adds to this a musical portrait of Baba Yaga flying around in her mortar and pestle, looking for stray children to grind into lunch.

The final tableau is based on Hartmann's design for a new gate in Kyiv, meant to commemorate Tsar Alexander II's narrow escape from assassination. Hartmann was pleased with his work, which won the design competition, but it was never built. "The Great Gate of Kyiv" captures the impressive scale of the planned monument. The first theme is based on the recurring promenade theme, while the secondary theme references a Russian orthodox hymn tune. Chanting and bell ringing contribute to a truly grand finale.

Ruth Enns,
Vancouver Academy of Music
September 2023



ALEXANDER GAVRYLYUK

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2023

7:30 pm St. Andrew's Wesley United Church

In his 2018 appearance at the Vancouver Playhouse, Alexander Gavrylyuk stunned the audience with a sweeping performance of Rachmaninoff's Sonata No. 2. Since then, we have been working hard to bring him back.

Gold medalist at the 1999 Horowitz Competition, the 2000 Hamamatsu Competition, and the 2005 Artur Schnabel Competition, this Ukrainian artist, who now resides in Australia with his family, delivers performances that go beyond virtuosity, with playing that generates a visceral excitement that we only experience with the greatest artists.

He has given recitals in, among others, Vienna's Musikverein, Zurich's Tonhalle, Geneva's Victoria Hall, Wigmore Hall, and the Concertgebouw. In 2009, he made an acclaimed recording of Prokofiev's complete piano concerti with Vladimir Ashkenazy and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, which was recorded live at the Sydney Opera House. In a review of his album of music by Brahms and Liszt, Gramophone magazine declares, "This album should be in every serious collector's library."

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ALEXANDER GAVRYLYUK
Piano



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