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SOCIETY

2024-2025 **SEASON**

MUSIC IS AN OUTBURST OF
THE SOUL

~ Frederick Delius ~

MARTIN GARCIA GARCIA
Sunday, October 27, 2024
3:00 PM Vancouver Playhouse

VADYM KHOLODENKO
Sunday, November 17, 2024
3:00 PM Vancouver Playhouse

MESSAGE FROM OUR **ARTISTIC DIRECTOR**

Our season continues with appearances by Martin Garcia Garcia as well as Vadym Kholodenko.

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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MARTIN GARCIA GARCIA

Polonaise-Fantaisie in A-flat Major, Op. 61

Impromptu No. 1 in A-flat Major, Op. 29

Sonata No. 1 in C minor, Op. 4

Allegro maestoso

Minuet and Trio

Larghetto

Finale

Intermission

Variations on a theme by Chopin

La Vega

El Polo, from Iberia Book III

Lavapiés, from Iberia Book II

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NOTES

Chopin, *Polonaise-Fantasia in A-flat major, Op. 61*

Today's concert starts with works by Chopin organized in reverse chronological order, starting with last and freest of his polonaises. The Polonaise-Fantasia was published in 1846, just three years before the composer's death from tuberculosis. It is a fantasy on the idea of a polonaise, a dance of the Polish nobility which Chopin used throughout his career for brilliant show pieces with heroic and nationalistic sentiment. An improvisatory introduction opens with the motive of a falling fourth in dotted rhythm, and several slow arpeggios that rise up the keyboard. The rhythm of the dance is then established in the left hand, while the right hand introduces the main theme. The music develops by continuous variation with complex harmony and the interplay of many voices. A large free ternary form is created by having a slow middle section, lyrical and eloquent with polyphony, which leads into a cadenza with double trills in both hands. The first tempo returns, and the music builds to an impressive climax. A left hand trill gently eases into the final chords.

Chopin, *Impromptu No. 1 in A-flat Major, Op. 29*

Chopin's four Impromptus, written in France between 1834 and 1842, share a sense of elegant spontaneity, as suggested by the title, and are arranged in expanded ABA form with a coda. Sections of brilliant figuration, often in triplets, alternate with melodic episodes.

The first of the impromptus to be published, the A-flat major Impromptu (1837) opens with effervescent triplet figurations. A lyrical middle section concludes with a series of trills, leading into the return of the playful first section. A brief pause sets apart the coda which alternates triplet reminiscences with calm chords, winding down gently.

Chopin, *Sonata in C minor, Op. 4 (posthumous)*

Allegro maestoso | *Minuet and Trio* | *Larghetto* | *Finale*

At the end of his first year of full-time music studies in Warsaw, when he was 18 years old, Chopin wrote his first full-scale sonata. It remained unpublished until 1851, two years after he died, but within a year of its composition, he would complete his well-known F-minor Piano Concerto. The first movement, *Allegro maestoso*, begins seriously with the main idea in the right hand, imitated immediately in the left. Efforts at counterpoint and motivic unity are clear throughout. The tonal plan is unorthodox, as instead of the expected two contrasting keys in the exposition, there is one

theme and just one key, C minor. When the reprise begins, there is another tonal surprise, as instead of the expected home key of C minor, the theme returns in B-flat minor and then wends its way back to the tonic.

There is a light, playful quality to the *Minuet and Trio*, with leaping triplets and off-beat sforzandi. The *Larghetto* foreshadows Chopin's nocturnes, an ornate cantabile over a rocking bass. Unusual aspects include its 5/4 time signature, and the many cross-rhythms formed by melodic ornaments sliding over the steady pulse of the accompaniment. The fiery *Finale* owes something to Beethoven in his vehement mode, with imaginative passagework connecting statements of the two main themes in various keys. Near the end, the first theme recurs in C minor, building to a climax with acrobatic arpeggios and thundering chords.

Mompou, *Variations on a Theme by Chopin*

Federico Mompou (1893-1987) was born and lived his later years in Barcelona but spent over twenty years in Paris. Because he suffered from extreme shyness, he did not perform in public, rather focussing on composing exquisite piano miniatures and songs. This set of twelve Variations (1938-57) is based on Chopin's well-known Prelude in A major and shows his harmonic imagination. Many of the variations are lyrical, but Variation 5 is a peppy *Mazurka* and Variation 7 is a double-note study for the right hand, marked *Allegro leggiero*. Variation 10 includes a quotation of the famous tune from the middle of Chopin's *Fantasia-Impromptu*. The last Variation is called *Galope*, a virtuosic perpetual motion which gets romantic in the middle—a touch of Rachmaninoff or Scriabin. The set ends with a simple *Epilogue* restating the tune with pungent new harmonies.

Albeniz, *La Vega*

Albeniz, *El Polo, from Iberia Book III*

Albeniz, *Lavapiés, from Iberia Book II*

Isaac Albeniz (1860-1909) started touring as a concert pianist at about age 5, starting out in Spain, and spreading out to various European centres as well as the Spanish Americas. He always had a flair for improvising; composition was a skill he developed in adulthood. He gradually became more serious about exploring his Spanish culture in his compositions. *La Vega (The Meadow)*, from 1896, depicts the plains on the edge of Granada as seen from its beautiful old Islamic palace, the Alhambra. It was inspired by a poem written by Albeniz's patron and sometimes librettist, F. B. Money-Coutts and was originally intended as an orchestral tone poem. It begins and ends peacefully, building up in spots with dense layers of sound. Seductive Spanish rhythms and scales combine with flashes of impressionistic colour for a varied portrait of a beloved landscape.

Iberia, a collection of twelve pieces Albeniz completed in 1908 just before his premature death, is considered his finest work, balancing virtuosity and musical complexity with popular appeal. El Polo is based on a flamenco dance song from the southern region of Andalusia, changing in mood from sweetly piquant to outbursts of sobbing. *Lavapiés* ("foot-washing") references a district of Madrid which is named after a church in the neighbourhood—this is a noisy street scene portrayed over a habañera rhythm. Albeniz says it should be played freely and joyfully, but he despaired of anyone actually being able to play it for all its thick texture of surface dissonance, and he almost destroyed the score.

Ruth Enns,
Vancouver Academy of Music
October 2024

Martin Garcia Garcia
Piano



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BIOGRAPHY

One of the most original artists to appear in the 2021 International Chopin Competition in Warsaw, Martin Garcia Garcia won 3rd prize in the prestigious competition as well as the prize for the best concerto performance. Earlier, he had won 1st prize in the 2021 Cleveland International Piano Competition.

In 2022, Martin Garcia Garcia performed over 70 concerto appearances and solo recitals internationally, including in iconic venues such as Carnegie Hall, Suntory Hall, and the National Auditorium of Music in Madrid. Last year, he continued to share his artistry and musicality with over 80 concerts in America, Asia, as well as Europe.

This young artist released his first solo album in 2023, with works by Bach, Chopin, Liszt, and Scriabin.

Martin strongly believes in approaching each concert with a profound purpose, and is committed to communicating the profundity and beauty of music to every member of the audience who has chosen to come and listen.

This will be Martin Garcia Garcia's Vancouver recital debut.

VADYM KHOLODENKO

First Pavan and Galliard
John Come and Kiss me now
Ballade
Sonata in G Major, Op. 31, No. 1
Allegro vivace
Adagio grazioso
Rondo, Allegretto

Intermission

3 Mazurkas, Op. 56
4 Mazurkas, Op. 41
Sonata No. 3 in B minor, Op. 58
Allegro maestoso
Scherzo
Largo
Rondo Finale

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NOTES

Byrd, *First Pavan and Galliard* Byrd, *John Come Kiss Me Now*

William Byrd (c.1540-1623) worked as organist at the Chapel Royal in London during the time of Queen Elizabeth I. Choirs are very grateful for the service music he wrote, but he contributed to many other musical genres of the time; his music for harpsichord fills seven CDs and includes fifty-six magnificent pavan and galliard pairs and some twenty variations on popular songs. The pavan is a slow, stately dance in duple time, and in the renaissance, it was often paired with a livelier galliard in triple time. The pair we hear, from *My Lady Nevell's Book* (1591), the first collection of keyboard pieces published by Byrd, shows the sombre tone and contrapuntal approach he brings to the genre.

"John Come Kiss Me Now" was preserved in the huge *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*, which includes over seventy works by Byrd. This is probably a late work, a set of sixteen variations on a popular song unified by recurring motives and building in rhythmic intensity to heights of virtuosity by the time it reaches Variation 14. The last two variations return to a slower tempo, while continuing to introduce new harmonies and counterpoints.

Saariaho, *Ballade*

Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho (1952-2023) lived much of her life in Paris, where she was involved in research into the acoustics of sound. Many of her compositions use dense polyphonic texture and because she had synesthesia (she saw colours when she heard sounds), her music often shows connections between visual and musical arts. Here is a note that Ms. Saariaho wrote about this piece:

"In this short piece I wanted to write music with a melody that grows out of the texture before descending into it again; a work that constantly shifts from a complex, multi-layered texture to concentrated single lines and back again. Why Ballade? Manny [Emanuel Ax] asked specifically for a piece bearing this title, and I wrote it for him in July 2005."

Beethoven, *Sonata in G Major, Op. 31, No. 1*

Allegro vivace | Adagio grazioso | Rondo, Allegretto

This delightful sonata was completed just after Beethoven's Heiligenstadt Testament of 1802, a letter in which the pianist contemplated the imminent loss of his hearing. His works of this time show new efforts to push at the

boundaries of tradition, and in this case, he seems to have fun doing that. The opening theme displaces the chords of the right hand, so they seem to have trouble coordinating with the left hand. The second theme enters like a cheerful polka, syncopated in the right-hand tune and in the "wrong" key of B major (III instead of the usual V), flipping soon to B minor. The ending emphasizes that the displaced chords still are not fixed, but suggests it is not a serious problem.

In the middle movement, *Adagio grazioso*, Beethoven takes on the operatic duet of his time, complete with frilly trills and cadenzas. The soprano voice sings the first cantabile, which is then echoed in the baritone range. There are moments of gravity, especially as the key slides from C major into C minor, or in the more intense middle section, but then the singers enter again, now accompanied by a serenade-like strumming accompaniment, first the soprano, then the baritone, and in the coda, a grumbly bass gets the final statement.

The light-hearted *Finale* uses sonata rondo form; in the opening, its pleasant first theme is heard in the upper register and then repeated in the left-hand range, like a dialogue. The second theme is anchored by a repeated pedal tone in the bass and gets more dramatic. Each time the first theme returns, it is varied in imaginative ways, with devices such as triplet accompaniments, right hand octaves, or rolling broken chord figurations. The coda seems to be a poetic deconstruction of the first theme, dissecting its motives, examining them in slow and fast tempos, and then tossing it all away with good humour.

Chopin, *Three Mazurkas, Op. 56* Chopin, *Four Mazurkas, Op. 41*

The mazurka was a popular dance in Parisian society in the 1830s, but its roots are in peasant Poland. It became one of Chopin's favourite genres with fifty-nine examples preserved, showing a broad range of influences from peasant foot stomping and bagpipe ostinatos to the most sophisticated harmonies and counterpoints. The three mazurkas of Op. 56 were published in 1844. The first, in B major, is in rondo form (ABABA Coda), with the two spinning oberek B sections in contrasting keys. Op. 56, No. 2 in C major is short, with rustic open fifths droning in the bass. The third mazurka (C minor) is extended, with shifting harmonic colours and a mysterious, subdued atmosphere.

The Op. 41 Mazurkas start with a Maestoso in C-sharp minor, the longest piece in this set. The first theme has a poignant Phrygian lowered second (D-natural), while the second theme is waltz-like. The music builds to a majestic climax and then hauntingly dies away. Next is the E minor Mazurka, sometimes called the Palma Mazurka, because Chopin wrote it during his

disastrous Spanish holiday of 1838-39 which he undertook in an attempt to improve his health. It has a little arch form (ABCBA), and a theme with a Phrygian inflection; Huneker called it “sad to the point of tears.” The B major Mazurka is a vigorous dance that shows its peasant roots, while the Mazurka in A-flat is playful and decorative.

Chopin, Sonata No. 3 in B minor, Op. 58

Allegro maestoso | Scherzo | Largo | Rondo Finale

Although he was only thirty-five years old when he wrote this sonata in 1844, Chopin was suffering from tuberculosis and had just four more years to live. The sonata is a work of monumental proportions, although its grandeur is relieved with moments of intimacy. The music of Bach was a fascination of Chopin's at this time, and counterpoint is everywhere. The first movement *Allegro maestoso* begins with a majestic B minor theme outlined in thick chords. A complex transition leads to theme two, a beautiful singing melody in D major. After development passages focussed on the opening material, the recapitulation is in B major (not the expected B minor) and truncated, avoiding the heroic first theme in favour of the lyrical second theme and ending optimistically.

The *Scherzo* is a whirling perpetual motion in E-flat major, rippling swiftly through all the registers of the piano. It has a quiet central trio with sonorous chords producing the effect of polyphony as they move, often over a bass pedal, and then the fleet *Scherzo* returns.

After a few dramatic chords, the third movement *Largo* is a long-breathed, ever-evolving aria in B major. The middle section is deeply reflective, transported to E major with miraculous shifting harmonies. A variation of the aria tune returns to the home key and then the hushed coda combines the decorative melody of the A section with the slowly mutating harmonic colours of the middle section.

Several bars of introduction break the spell and the main theme of the *Rondo Finale* is launched in the lower half of the keyboard, driving and relentless, full of passion. Major key episodes have cascades of dazzling scales in the top half of the keyboard. The heroic rondo theme is transformed with new harmonies and figurations at every appearance, the last time leading to a triumphant conclusion with a brilliant coda.

Ruth Enns,
Vancouver Academy of Music
October 2024

Vadym Kholodenko
Piano



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BIOGRAPHY

After Vadym Kholodenko's stunning recital debut in 2022, we immediately re-engaged him for this return appearance.

Even since his gold medal win at the 2013 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, Kholodenko has been dazzling audiences the world over with his superhuman virtuosity, his profound musicality and the depth of his interpretations.

His artistry and pianism have led to invitations from the world's finest orchestras and concert halls.

His recordings for Harmonia Mundi have received accolades from Gramophone magazine as well as from BBC Music Magazine. His latest release, a pairing of Beethoven's towering "Diabelli Variations" with Rzewski's "The People United Will Never be Defeated", has been met with tremendous critical acclaim. Critic Norman Lebrecht describes Kholodenko as being "in the elite of classical pianists."

An avid chamber musician, Kholodenko has formed partnerships with some of today's finest musicians, including Vadim Repin, Alena Beava, and the Belcea and Jerusalem string quartets.

If you missed Kholodenko's first appearance in Vancouver, do not miss this opportunity to experience the music-making of this incredible artist and musician.

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