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2024-2025 **SEASON**

MUSIC IS AN OUTBURST OF
THE SOUL

~ Frederick Delius ~

LUCAS DEBARGUE
Monday, February 17, 2025
3:00 PM Vancouver Playhouse

MESSAGE FROM OUR ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Our season continues with appearance by Lucas Debargue.

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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LUCAS DEBARGUE

Preludes, Op.103

Piano Sonata No. 27 in E minor, Op. 90

I. Mit Lebhaftigkeit und durchaus mit Empfindung und Ausdruck

II. Nicht zu geschwind und sehr singbar vorgetragen

Scherzo No. 4 in E Major, Op. 54

Intermission

Theme and Variations, Op. 73

Piano Sonata No. 14 "Moonlight", Op. 27, No. 2

I. Adagio sostenuto

II. Allegretto

III. Presto agitato

Ballade No. 3 in A-flat Major, Op. 47

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*We acknowledge the financial support of
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NOTES

Fauré, Preludes, Op. 103

This meditative set of preludes comes from 1909-10, when Fauré was age 65. He was five years into his appointment as Head of the Paris Conservatoire and facing problems with his hearing. There are nine short pieces in the set, mostly moderate in tempo, rich in counterpoint and settling into the security of a tonal cadence as they reach their end. Harmony is highly original, flavoured with modal inflections and unresolved colour chords. The impression is of clarity and restraint, enriched with inventive subtlety. The first Prelude is song-like, while the second is a whirling perpetual motion in 5/4 time. The third focusses on a repeated note, B-flat, surrounded by a kaleidoscope of harmonies, and Prelude 4 is a charming sicilienne. The fifth Prelude begins in an unsettled mood, followed by the canonic sixth Prelude which has the left hand echoing the right. Prelude 7 builds to a forceful climax, while Prelude 8 is a scherzo with guitar-like repeated notes. At the end is a profound Adagio, the twisting left hand line seeking resolution and ultimately finding it.

Beethoven, Piano Sonata No. 27 in E minor, Op. 90

I. Mit Lebhaftigkeit und durchaus mit Empfindung und Ausdruck
II. Nicht zu geschwind und sehr singbar vorgetragen

After five years of creating no new piano sonatas, Beethoven wrote this E minor Sonata in the summer of 1814, as his revival of the opera *Fidelio* was being well-received, and the orchestral version of his patriotic novelty piece *Wellington's Victory* brought in considerable sums of money. He had made his last public appearance as a soloist that spring, his deafness now making it impossible for him to play in public. The Sonata was dedicated to Count Moritz Lichnowsky, the younger brother of Prince Karl, both of whom were long-standing patrons of Beethoven.

There are just two movements, the first, which Beethoven instructs should be played "With animation, feeling and expression throughout" is compact and impassioned. Anton Schindler, Beethoven's friend and biographer, said it depicts "a contest between head and heart." Two contrasting motives set up tension at the beginning, the first being detached and emphatic, while the second is lyrical.

The second movement, "Not too fast and very singingly," is a leisurely rondo featuring a wonderful melody of Schubertian warmth, long, symmetrically structured and repeated with little variation, something unusual in Beethoven. Schindler wrote that this movement is "a conversation with the Beloved."

Chopin, Scherzo No. 4 in E Major, Op. 54

The E major Scherzo is the longest and most joyful of Chopin's four scherzos, with brilliant right-hand passage work and mostly major tonality. It begins with a collection of seemingly unrelated motives—connections among them are revealed as they recur throughout the piece. The trio is slower, in singing style, followed by a varied reprise of the first section. The coda recalls the main motives, increasing in speed and excitement.

Fauré, Theme and Variations, Op. 73

In 1895, when he wrote this magnificent set of Variations, Fauré was 50 years old, working long hours running daily services at his church job and giving piano and harmony lessons to support his family with two growing boys; the next year, he would begin teaching composition at the Paris Conservatoire. This was also the time of his affair with Emma Bardac, a lovely young woman who had inspired him to write the song cycle *La bonne chanson* the year before (Emma would eventually become the wife of Debussy).

The theme is solemn and march-like in its first presentation, using the dark key of C-sharp minor. In the first variation, the theme resounds in the bass as the right hand embroiders intricate countermelodies high above. The tempo speeds up for the complex scherzo in the second variation, leading to two more virtuosic permutations of intense expression. Variation 5 is lyrical and waltz-like with doublings in thirds, sixths and octaves, while in Variation 6 Adagio, the bass slowly rises up as the right hand sighs down. Variation 7 has conversation between hands, followed by a quiet variation in four voices and another even slower and sweeter. Many composers would have ended the set with the rollicking perpetual motion of Variation 10, but Fauré follows it with a sustained, chorale-like epilogue, ending in radiant C major.

Beethoven, Sonata No. 14 in C-sharp Minor, Op. 27 No. 2 (Moonlight)

I. Adagio sostenuto

II. Allegretto

III. Presto agitato

In Vienna around 1800, the young pianist Beethoven had the reputation of being the best improviser in town—reports of improvisation contests bear this out. The two sonatas of Opus 27, published when he was age 31, are both called “Sonata quasi una fantasia”—sonata in the style of an improvisational fantasia. Instead of beginning with the traditional Allegro movement, this Sonata opens with the famous “moonlight” movement, an Adagio whose mood is set by delicate right-hand triplets veiled in pedal. The nickname originally came from the poet Rellstab, who said it brought to his mind an image of a lake reposing in twilight moon-shimmer. Others have noted its doleful dotted rhythms suggest a funeral march.

The second movement is a clear and flowing Minuet and Trio in the parallel major. Liszt remarked that it was like “a flower between two abysses.” The weight of this sonata is in the last movement, a passionate outburst marked Presto agitato which uses full sonata form. It begins with arpeggios rising over menacing staccatos in the bass. A sense of agitation is never absent, and gets intensified with off-beat sforzandos, long pedals and an elaborate coda, culminating in a cadenza which rises heroically from the depths, only to fall again before the final tempestuous chords.

Chopin, Ballade No. 3 in A-flat Major, Op. 47

The third of Chopin’s four Ballades was written in the summer of 1841 at the country estate of his partner, the writer known by her pen name George Sand. It opens with a gently lyric theme, a question rising in the right hand, answered in the left. The second theme starts with lilting octaves in the submediant key, F major. A leggiero waltz-like third theme appears, and some development follows, increasing the intensity with key changes and fast passagework. The reprise is compact and virtuosic with chromatic octaves, coming to a resounding end with a flourish of the waltz theme; this tale has a happy ending.

Ruth Enns,
Vancouver Academy of Music
January 2025



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BIOGRAPHY

The incredible gift, artistic vision and creative freedom of Lucas Debargue was revealed by his performances at the Tchaikovsky International Competition in Moscow in 2015 and distinguished with the coveted Prize of the Moscow Music Critics' Association.

Today, Lucas is invited to play solo and with leading orchestras in the most prestigious venues of the world including Berlin Philharmonie, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Konzerthaus Vienna, Théâtre des Champs Elysées and Philharmonie Paris, London's Wigmore Hall and Royal Festival Hall, Alte Oper Frankfurt, Cologne Philharmonie, Suntory Hall Tokyo, the concert halls of Beijing, Shanghai, Taipei, Seoul, and of course the legendary Grand Hall of Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow, the Mariinsky Concert Hall in St. Petersburg and Carnegie Hall in New York. He also appeared several times at the summer meetings of La Roque d'Anthéron and Verbier.

Lucas Debargue regularly collaborates with Valery Gergiev, Mikhail Pletnev, Vladimir Jurowski, Andrey Boreyko, Tugan Sokhiev, Vladimir Spivakov and Bertrand de Billy. His chamber music partners include Gidon Kremer, Janine Jansen, and Martin Fröst.

Born in 1990, Lucas forged a highly unconventional path to success. Having discovered classical music at the age of 10, the future musician began to feed his passion and curiosity with diverse artistic and intellectual experiences, which included advanced studies of literature and philosophy. The encounter with the celebrated piano teacher Rena Shereshevskaya proved a turning point: her vision and guidance inspired Lucas to make a life-long professional commitment to music.

A performer of fierce integrity and dazzling communicative power, Lucas Debargue draws inspiration for his playing from literature, painting, cinema, jazz, and develops very personal interpretation of a carefully selected repertoire. Though the core piano repertoire is central to his career, he is keen to present works by lesser-known composers like Karol Szymanowski, Nikolai Medtner, or Milosz Magin.

Lucas devotes a large portion of his time to composition and has already created over twenty works for piano solo and chamber ensembles. These include Orpheo di camera concertino for piano, drums and string orchestra, premiered by Kremerata Baltica, and a Piano Trio was created under the auspices of the Louis Vuitton Foundation in Paris. As a permanent guest Artist of Kremerata Baltica, Lucas has been commissioned to write a chamber opera.

Sony Classical has released five of his albums with music of Scarlatti, Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, Liszt, Ravel, Medtner and Szymanowski. His monumental four-volume tribute to Scarlatti, which came out at the end of 2019, has been praised by The New York Times and selected by NPR among "the ten classical albums to usher in the next decade". August 2021 sees the release of an album devoted to the Polish composer Miłosz Magin. A true discovery of a fascinating yet unknown composer recorded with Kremerata Baltica and Gidon Kremer.

Lucas's breakthrough at the Tchaikovsky Competition is the subject of the documentary To Music. Directed by Martin Mirabel and produced by Bel Air Media, it was shown at the International Film Festival in Biarritz in 2018.

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