



The Vancouver
CHOPIN
SOCIETY

2026-2027 **SEASON**

After silence, that which come nearest,
To expressing the inexpressible is

MUSIC

~ Aldous Huxley ~

WILLIAM YANG

piano

Monday, October 12, 2026

3:00 PM Vancouver Playhouse

MESSAGE FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

We welcome another outstanding laureate from the 2025 International Chopin Competition in Warsaw: William Yang, Sixth Prize winner and recipient of First Prize, Best Mazurka performance, and Best Sonata performance at the 2025 National Chopin Piano Competition in Miami.

For our 2026-2027 season, we again strive to present performances by seasoned concert artists as well as outstanding musicians 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.

We are excited that William will be performing today on our newly acquired Steinway & Sons concert grand piano. Those who attended the performance by Kevin Chen in September would already have experienced the sonic splendor of this new instrument.

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.

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

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WILLIAM YANG

Partita No. 2 in C minor, BWV 826

Dumka, Op. 59

Preludes, Op. 11, Nos. 5-6, 9-14, 21-22

La valse

Intermission

Two Nocturnes, Op. 32

Sonata No. 2 in B-Flat Minor, Op. 35

Fantasy in B minor, Op. 28

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NOTES

Bach, *Partita No. 2 in C minor, BWV 826*

Sinfonia; Allemande; Corrente; Sarabande; Rondeau; Capriccio

Bach was in his forties when he wrote the set of six suites he called “Partitas.” While they represent the culmination of his dance music for harpsichord, they are also the first pieces he published, suggesting that Bach thought they represented him at his best. He released them at a rate of one per year, and then in 1731 collected all six as Part I of *Clavier-Übung (Keyboard Exercises, for the enjoyment of music lovers)*.

Partita No. 2 starts with a Sinfonia in three sections: stately chords in the dotted rhythms of the French style are followed by an ornamental melody over a walking bass, and then a lively fugue in triple time. The Allemande has two contrapuntal voices in binary form, while the ensuing Courante features three voices. The Sarabande is the slow movement of the suite, with the right hand incorporating both soprano and alto voices, supported by a sympathetic bass. Rondeaux are unusual in Bach’s suites, the title referring to the formal practice of having a repeated refrain; this one playfully varies the refrain each time it comes around. Rather than ending with the usual Gigue (jig), this suite concludes with a fanciful Capriccio which has fugal imitation between the hands; in the second half, the theme is turned upside down. While the suite begins with seriousness befitting the key of C minor, by the end Bach demonstrates that fun can also happen in this key!

Tchaikovsky, *Dumka, Op. 59*

After years of international travel, Tchaikovsky returned to rural Russia in 1885, settling into a house ninety kilometres north of Moscow and committing himself to promoting Russian music. His new home must have inspired this *Dumka* for piano, subtitled “Russian rustic scene.” A *dumka* is piece of Slavic origin calling on folk music influences and contrasting melancholy sections with moments of exuberance. This one opens with a moody modal tune in peasant style, treated to a series of variations in C minor. A bright new idea begins in E-flat major, transformed in sections of varying moods: high-spirited, lyrical, playful or wild. Inevitably, the first theme returns, now bleak and sad.

Scriabin, *Preludes, Op. 11, Nos. 5-6, 9-14, 21-22*

Russian pianist Scriabin had an affinity for writing poetic preludes for piano, no doubt inspired by the set Chopin had written fifty years earlier. Today we will hear ten of the twenty-four preludes Scriabin assembled between 1888 and 1896, the period in which he became a teacher at the Moscow Conservatory and was first married. Many of these are just a page in the

score, distilling a mood in a few moments. For example, the left hand of No. 5 in D major has a walking bass below a right hand which seems to dream of reaching heaven, while No. 6 in B minor is passionate and ominous. Romantic expressiveness, chromatic harmonies and melodic counterpoint are all to be enjoyed in these lyrical miniatures.

Ravel, *La valse*

Ravel had the idea of a piece which would be a tribute to the waltzes of Johann Strauss and the old Vienna as early as 1906. Events of World War I interrupted his work, so the score was not complete until 1920. The composer called it a choreographic poem, but ballet impresario Diaghilev’s response when he heard it was, “it’s a masterpiece but it isn’t a ballet; it’s a portrait of a ballet.” Ravel claimed the setting was a ballroom scene at an Imperial Court about 1855, but the dancing is disrupted by fragmented themes and disturbing juxtapositions, building to an explosive climax in the final bars. The orchestral score was Ravel’s main goal, but he also simultaneously completed versions for solo piano and for two pianos. The solo version is not often played because of its formidable technical demands.

Chopin, *Two Nocturnes, Op. 32*

In 1836-7, when he wrote these nocturnes, young Chopin was making a decent living in Paris, giving lessons to aristocratic amateurs along with composing and playing at the salons of the rich and famous. It was also the year he became engaged and then broke up with Maria Wodzińska. Opus 32, dedicated to Baroness Camille de Billing, shows his affinity for bel canto opera, with elegant ornamental melodies floating over rich harmonic support. The B major Nocturne dissolves into a dramatic recitative, ending darkly in B minor. The sweet simplicity of the Nocturne in A-flat major intensifies in the middle with tonal shifts to F minor and F-sharp minor, then gradually the opening mood returns along with the home key.

Chopin, *Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor, Op. 35*

Grave – Doppio movimento

Scherzo

Marche funèbre: Lento

Finale: Presto

The famous funeral march in the third movement of this sonata was written two years before the rest of the piece. In 1839, during his first summer at the country home of George Sand, Chopin added the other three movements. An ominous announcement in four measures of Grave creates a solemn atmosphere. The breathless first theme of the Allegro, based on short motivic fragments, is like a desperate plea. By contrast, the second theme

is a soulful nocturne. The development builds to an exciting climax, urged on by repeating motives of the first theme. The recapitulation is famously truncated by omitting the first theme, moving directly to the sustained second theme and then rushing on triumphantly to the final cadence. The Scherzo is fiery and grim, set in relief by the quiet lyricism of its middle section. The iconic “Marche funèbre” follows, in many ways the central movement of the cycle. The doleful march with its inexorable left-hand ostinato frames a nostalgic middle section. The last movement is unusual; rather than balancing the substantial first movement, it is a short postlude to the march, an eerie perpetual motion with the hands always playing a single line one octave apart.

Scriabin, *Fantasy in B minor, Op. 28*

Scriabin wrote this Fantasy in 1900 after a successful international tour as a pianist, while he was still teaching in Moscow. A single movement in clear sonata form, its technical challenges, depth of feeling and complexity of harmony suggest the influences of Liszt and Wagner. The opening is brooding and unsettled, avoiding the tonic chord, dense with counterpoint, the left hand always dragging down. The second theme then sings out in D major, a beautiful melody, pure and high. The closing themes reinforce this key, becoming more passionate with thicker chords and faster tempo. The development is based on sequences building up to great intensity and leading into the return of the tonic key and the main themes, now transformed with new figurations. The secondary themes return in heroic guise in B major, with hands sweeping swiftly over the keyboard in triumph. A coda follows this, falling back into B minor, combining the themes in fantasy style and ending with a grand apotheosis.

Ruth Enns,
Douglas College
September 2026



WILLIAM YANG,
piano

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BIOGRAPHY

Twenty-four-year-old William Yang won first prize at the 2025 National Chopin Piano Competition in Miami, Florida. In addition to the \$100,000 prize, he will receive a recording project with the Steinway label and will embark on a concert tour, which includes a performance at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall in June 2025. At the same competition, William also won awards for the best performance of a mazurka and a sonata.

William has gained recognition in several prestigious competitions, including Second Prize at the 2014 Midwest International Piano Competition, Sixth Prize at the 2018 Thomas and Evon Cooper International Piano Competition, and he was a semifinalist who won the special Bach Prize at the 2015 Cleveland International Piano Competition.

As a soloist, Mr. Yang has performed with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, the Southeast Iowa Symphony Orchestra, and the Minnesota Orchestra. He studied at the Curtis Institute of Music and is currently a Kovner Fellow at The Juilliard School, where he is under the guidance of Robert McDonald. His previous teachers include Alexander Korsantia and Paul Wirth. He has also received instruction from notable pianists such as Hung-Kuan Chen, Yoheved Kaplinsky, Antonio Pompa-Baldi, Gary Graffman, Peter Takacs, Boris Berman, and Andre Watts.

William began his piano studies at the age of four and gave his first performances when he was seven. Outside of music, he enjoys playing table tennis.

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

In our season opening concert with Kevin Chen, we inaugurated our newly acquired Steinway & Sons piano to universal acclaim.

Members of the audience, including many musicians and pianists, praised the beautiful sound quality of the instrument. Kevin Chen himself declared himself completely pleased with the piano and commented on how comfortable and easy it is to play on the piano.

Before the recital, Graham Blank, Vice-President of Tom Lee Music Canada, gave a highly interesting talk – Secrets of the Steinway – where he presented details the meticulousness that goes into the making of every Steinway piano. At the end of the talk, Graham showed a short video of our piano-selection tour to New York City with Charles Richard-Hamelin, our eminent Artistic Director.

The Vancouver Chopin Society is able to make this major acquisition in a relatively short time because of incredible the generosity of many individuals. At this point, we have paid \$300,000 of the total amount of \$329,000 (including taxes). In addition, we are now completely responsible for the costs of storage, insurance, maintenance, and tuning of the piano – all to ensure that the piano will continue to give all our future artists the best possible piano experience for decades to come.

We see this acquisition as an investment in and a testament to the future of live music in Vancouver. And this is why we are asking you, our supporters, to please continue your financial support of our piano campaign, so that the piano can continue to make beautiful music for you.

We thank everyone who has helped us acquire our beautiful instrument, and we thank all of you for your continuing support.

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