

Program notes

Prelude and Fugue BWV 888 in A major

J. S. Bach

The Well-Tempered Clavier BWV 846-893 is a collection of 48 preludes and fugues by Johann Sebastian Bach published in two books. The publications are separated by thirty years, 1742 and 1772. They approach the complexity of polyphonic writing in each of the twelve major and minor keys, representing the most substantial writing for solo keyboard work from the Baroque era. 'Well-Tempered' implies a tuning system that divides the octave into 12 semitones and performance would work equally well in all keys.

The Prelude in A major opens with a poetic and pastoral character. It is in three voices, with a two-bar motif repeated and inverted throughout. The Fugue is in three parts too, but with a rather fast tempo in contrast with the prelude. The subject starts with a pickup beat and its syncopated rhythm has a humorous and playful effect.

Piano Sonata D 537 in A minor

Franz Schubert

The sonata was written in March 1817 and was published in 1852 posthumously. He wrote the piece when he was 19 when he had already made his name as a songwriter. This sonata was his ticket to the world as a serious concert music composer.

I. Allegro ma non troppo: The contrasts are set by the majestic chords and the gently running arpeggios at the outset. The opening statement built by minor triads makes its appearance with a noble gesture and as a rhetorical question while shows the delicacy of the inner world. The whispery arpeggios come right after as an answer to the former question. This contrast between question and answers is very common in this piece. For example, there are phrases with severe and impulsive characters in Bar 16-20, and as it ends, a very sweet and gentle waltz-like

section shows up after one bar of rest. The exchanges of the emotions and color, and the conversation's collision and fusion are the most compelling effect made in this movement.

II. Allegretto quasi Andantino: This movement is poetic and pastoral, in a slightly fast pulse with different touches between the melody and the accompaniment. Right-hand sweeps the keys in the style of legato while the left hand softly plays pizzicato-like figures. The two different styles make their ways together and follow the same emotional lead with the dynamic ladders.

III. Allegro Vivace: The intense conversations appear in the very beginning just like the first movement. The second theme is sweet and at the same time irresistible, showing the emotions compellingly and boldly. This movement is a kind of sonata-allegro movement without the development section. The whole movement only has two sections and they take turns with each other.

Piano Suite op. 14

Bela Bartok

In a 1944 radio interview, Bartók said, "The suite op. 14 has no folk tunes. When this work was composed I had in mind the refining of piano technique, the changing of piano technique, into a more transparent style. A style more of bone and muscle opposing the heavy chordal style of the late, latter romantic period, that is, unessential ornaments like broken chords and other figures are omitted and it is more a simpler style."

Though Bartók announced not to use folk melodies in this piece, he did put the other folk elements, such as the Romanian Ardeleana couple dance(a dance that is found in the Banat area of Romania) in the first movement.

The first piece revolves around the excited and energetic repetition of rhythm in the style of a Romanian folk dance. The unexpected chords add surprise to the relatively expected rhythm and bring out the fun of the surprise with the dissonance. The Lydian and whole-tone scale also made the first movement sound exotic.

The scherzo is filled with dissonance and edges. In the opening section, the patterns are made of broken augmented chords along with the minor seconds, contrary motion on the keyboard. After that, the broken chords and the minor seconds rhythmically changed and rearranged, as if the pieces are the playground of the dissonance.

Bartok pointed out that in the third movement, the original elements are under the influence of Arabic. The left-hand ostinato(looping melodic pattern) made the machine-like driving force in the piece, while the right hand made the percussive effect.

The last movement sostenuto appears as a twist for the previous movements. The finale gives the audience a meditation with a relatively slow tempo and gentle touch.

Intermission

Piano Suite op. 119

Johanne Brahms

This piano suite marks the last opus of Johannes Brahms's piano works. He named each of the first three pieces as intermezzo, and the last one Rhapsody. He finished the suite during his summer holiday in Austria, 1893.

No. 1 Intermezzo in B minor: Brahms wrote this piece with the spirit of a poet. As the tempo is marked in adagio, a sigh slowly sweeps by from the composer's late-life reflection. With the top notes creating the melody, the alto and bass appear as delicate as they can be. In the

letter that he wrote to Clara Schumann, the composers said.” The little piece is exceptionally melancholic and ‘to be played very slowly’ is not an understatement. Every bar and every note must sound like a *ritardando*!”

No. 2 intermezzo in E minor (*Andantino un poco agitato*): Like the tempo indication, this piece is agitating with the sorrow carried from the last piece, only with a more disturbing mood. It was written in ternary form. The mood is in-between disturbed, wishful, and bitter-sweet. The detached notes in the right hand make its delicate contrast with the staccato in the left.

The middle section (*Andantino Grazioso*) is in E major, in here, the imagination of longing finds its place. The emotional roller coaster reached its sweetest peak. After that, the opening melody creeps in as if the gloomy reality breaks the fragile world of fancy. When the audience may think that it will end up in its opening key, E minor. The story has a surprising turn-over. The bright side wins over the darkness with the melody used in the middle section and ends in E major.

No. 3 intermezzo in C major: C major’s magic delights the third piece. This piece is marked as *Grazioso e Giocosso*. The character is bright, positive, and full of humor. It is almost like a scherzo, though different in form. The interesting thing about this piece is that the alto part presents the melody. The soprano plays softly with gentle touches like brushing the keyboard. The dynamic contrast is brought up with *sostenuto* where the emotion approaches a peak and is released by it.

The etudes in Scriabin's Op. 42 does not only focus on the piano techniques but also the rich colors and the song-like melody. It represents Scriabin's style as a Russian composer, these etudes are extremely compelling in emotional depth and at the same time noble and delicate.

Op 42, no 4 in F sharp major: This etude is full of cross-rhythms with different meters in each hand. The rhythm makes the sweet bitterness of the melody come out with more intensity.

Op 42, no 5 in C sharp minor: This piece is one of his best-known piano works and requires the pianist to be technically accomplished. Marked Affanato (breathless), this etude was filled with struggles, hope, and regrets with the stormy mood and dark sonority.

Novelette

Eduardo palacios

Mélodie

Educated in Brooklyn College, Eduardo Palacios, a versatile American-Mexican composer composed music for different genres that include classical and Latin. Many of his works have been performed in Tri-state venues. The piece Novelette received its premiere in Brooklyn College in 2019.

It begins with a deep melody infused in a rich fabric of harmonies. The dreamy atmosphere evolves as the pitches rises and register widens, expressing an anguished emotion ablaze in forte. One of the most dramatic moments is at the end when the tempo slows down with a fortissimo. The theme expands itself and creates an effect that is both fiery and noble. The weight of the final chords vibrates as a bell toll, which concludes a story that is tragic, solemn and moving.

The title of the piece Mélodie implies its song-like nature, being played on the keyboard as it is being sung. The structure is simple, introduction comes first in a rather slow tempo with a darker mood to arouse a mysterious atmosphere. Then the main melody appears with a feeling of

yearning and reminiscence, which is repeated with an ever increasing texture employing counterpoint.

No longer Very Clear piano suite:

Joan Tower

Holding a daisy

Or... like an engine

John Ashbery's poem "no longer very clear" takes credits for the names of these pieces in the piano suite. Joan Tower used the lines from the poem as names of her pieces.

Holding a Daisy (1996) was commissioned by the pianist Sarah Rothenberg for her New York recital. The inspiration is from a Georgia O'Keeffe's flower painting. Although the title suggests gentleness, the music is not as innocent as people might assume. There are multiple tempo changes throughout the piece to show the tension and the contrast between each section. In the very beginning, the tempo marking is 36 for a quarter, after a system, the tempo is speeding up to 44, and it slows down again to 36. Through the tempi changes the contrast is intensified and it shows the dramatic relationship between phrase to phrase and section to section.

Or Like a ... an Engine (1994) is dedicated to the pianist Ursula Oppens who premiered it at Alice Tully Hall in New York City in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the radio station WNYC-FM, which commissioned the work. Unlike the previous piece, this one appears just like its name "engine". The rhythmic drive makes the piece motor-like and virtuosic.