

VERIZON HALL

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 23

8PM

WACHOVIA MASTER MUSICIANS, PIANO SERIES

LANG LANG, PIANO

MOZART

Piano Sonata in C Major, K. 300h (K. 330)

Allegro moderato
Andante cantabile
Allegretto

CHOPIN

Piano Sonata No. 3 in B Minor, Op. 58

Allegro maestoso
Scherzo: Molto vivace
Largo
Finale: Presto, non tanto

—*Intermission*—

SCHUMANN

Kinderscenen (Scenes from Childhood), Op. 15

Von fremden Ländern und Menschen (From Foreign Lands and Peoples)
Kuriose Geschichte (Curious Story)
Hasche-Mann (Blind Man's Bluff)
Bittendes Kind (Pleading Child)
Glückes genug (Happiness)
Wichtige Begebenheit (An Important Event)
Träumerei (Dreaming)
Am Kamin (At the Fireside)
Ritter vom Steckenpferd (Knight of the Hobbyhorse)
Fast zu ernst (Almost Too Serious)
Fürchtenmachen (Frightening)
Kind im Einschlummern (Child Falling Asleep)
Der Dichter spricht (The Poet Speaks)

RACHMANINOFF

Prelude in B-flat Major, Op. 23, No. 2

Prelude in G Minor, Op. 23, No. 5

LISZT

Petrarch Sonnet No. 104, Années de pèlerinage No. 2

Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2, S244 (Horowitz Transcription)



WACHOVIA

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WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

(b. Salzburg, Austria, 1756; d. Vienna, Austria, 1791)
Piano Sonata in C Major, K. 300h (K. 330)

The first 12 of Mozart's 19 surviving piano sonatas were composed in groups of sixes and threes, in keeping with 18th-century tradition. The Sonata in C major belongs to a set of three long thought to have been written during his Paris sojourn in 1778, but shown by musicologist Alan Tyson, on the basis of handwriting and paper type, to have been composed about the time of Mozart's visit to Salzburg late in the summer of 1783.

Though composed in a short space of time, each of the 1783 sonatas displays a distinctive character, reflecting Mozart's ever-present wealth of ideas. Commentators disagree as to whether Mozart wrote piano sonatas primarily as teaching tools or to play himself on his numerous concerts. Some combination of the two purposes seems entirely reasonable.

The C major Sonata, deemed "one of the most lovable works Mozart ever wrote" by eminent Mozart scholar Alfred Einstein, follows the same structural outline as the F major Sonata of the same group: two sonata-form movements framing a songlike middle movement. Uncommon features of the C major Sonata's lighthearted first movement include a development section based chiefly on unrelated new material, with only occasional references to the first theme, and the return of the second theme in the recapitulation in an atypical key (the dominant, G major) before turning to the customary home key (C major).

The lovely Andante cantabile follows a minuet and trio form, consisting of a two-part opening section, both parts repeated; a contrasting "trio" in two parts, again each repeated; and a return to the opening without repeats. Recurring groups of repeated notes unify the outer and inner sections. The movement closes with a soft passage based on the "trio," which curiously did not appear in Mozart's own manuscript but was printed in the first edition.

The lively main theme of the finale begins with the delightful device of a slight offset between the start of the right and left hands. Mozart varies the second statement by supplying a busier left hand that coincides with the right, but reverts to offbeat beginnings when the right hand takes off on a run. Like the first movement, the "development" section presents intriguing new material rather than working out the first and second themes. The piece concludes much like the end of the first section, but with a brief harmonic deviation before the three final chords.

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN

(b. Zelazowa Wola, near Warsaw, Poland, 1810; died in Paris, France, 1849)
Piano Sonata No. 3 in B Minor, Op. 58

Until they parted ways in 1847, Chopin and writer George Sand spent most of their summers at Nohant, her country estate, where Chopin composed some of his best works. One of the greatest of these, the Third Piano Sonata, Op. 58, was completed during the summer and early fall of 1844, before his relationship with Sand had soured and altogether one of the happiest periods of Chopin's life. The composer dedicated the work to pupil and friend Countess Emilie de Perthuis, wife of aide-de-camp Louis-Philippe, to whom Chopin had dedicated his Opus 24 Mazurkas.

Early critics belittled Chopin's formal technique in his three mature sonatas, now considered masterpieces: No. 2 in B-flat minor (which contains the popular Funeral March), the present Sonata, and his last work, the Cello Sonata. More recently his "abnormalities" have come to be appreciated for their supreme ingenuity. In a throwback to certain 18th-century sonatas, his first-movement sonata forms begin the return (recapitulation) of the opening section not with the first theme group, but with the second. This allowed him great liberty to treat the first theme to complex contrapuntal working-out in the development section without fear of overexposure. His development sections also show him taking the Romantic fancy for chromatic elaboration to highly original levels.

The first movement of the B minor Sonata is packed with ideas. One must bear in mind that certain melodic or figural wisps in Chopin's music generate material whose sophisticated kinship crosses sections and movements, and thus provides a kind of unity that lurks beneath the surface. Almost every passage of fast 16th notes can be related to the brief cascade at the very outset. Especially striking are the mysterious incarnations in contrary motion, which bring about a grand gesture with a nice harmonic surprise. The lovely second theme with its widely spaced broken-chord accompaniment would seem right at home in one of Chopin's nocturnes. This is the theme that, after remarkable contrapuntal working-out of the first theme, returns to initiate the recapitulation.

Chopin's Scherzo, placed second as in the Second Sonata, is one of those glistening, feather-light creations that flashes by, interrupted by a much lengthier introspective central section. This centerpiece offers a kind of slow-moving counterpoint over long-held notes that allows the listener to enter a dreamworld.

The Largo begins and ends majestically—a slow march possibly conceived under the same impulse as the Funeral March of the Second Sonata. One senses Chopin's great love for Italian opera in the singing melodic line with distinctive accompaniment that follows the dramatic unison introduction. Along the way he treats the listener to some remarkable harmonic twists and turns, leading to an exquisite middle section that again lulls one into reverie, and lasts much longer than the opening section or its condensed return.

Chopin's finale takes the form of a rondo—not a lighthearted romp as in Classical-period sonatas, but a surging movement whose refrain gives a feeling of inexorable power. The intervening episodes are relentless in another way, requiring utmost virtuosity to make the right-hand filigree seem effortless. A bravura coda presses the built-up excitement to a dazzling conclusion.

ROBERT SCHUMANN

(b. Zwickau, Saxony, 1810; d. Eendenich, near Bonn, Germany, 1856)
Kinderscenen, Op. 15

Schumann was at his best when composing miniatures for piano, which he grouped together under various picturesque titles such as *Davidsbündlertänze*, *Fantasiestücke*, *Novellen* and *Kreisleriana*. Perhaps the most purely conceived works of this type, distilled to their essence, are the 13 *Kinderscenen* (Scenes from Childhood), Op. 15. He described them in a letter to Clara Wieck in March 1838, two years before their marriage, while they were still fighting parental disapproval:

Whether it was an echo of what you said to me once, "that sometimes I seemed to you like a child," anyhow I suddenly got an inspiration, and knocked off about 30 quaint little things, from which I have selected 12 [sic] and called them *Kinderscenen*. They will amuse you, but of course you must forget that you are a virtuoso. They have such titles as "Fürchtenmachen" [Frightening], "Am Kamin" [By the Fireside], "Hasche-Mann" [The Bogey Man], "Bittendes Kind" [Pleading Child], "Ritter vom Steckenpferd" [Knight of the Hobbyhorse], "Von fremden Ländern" [From Foreign Lands], "Curiose Geschichte" [Curious Story], etc., and I don't know what besides. Well, they all explain themselves, and what's more are as easy as possible.

Unlike the later *Album für die Jugend*, which are written for children, Schumann said that the *Kinderscenen* are really addressed to adults, "reminiscences of an adult for adults." Their unassuming front masks an incredible attention to detail, unity, and poetic content. They are connected not only by programmatic content, but by thematic unity: nearly all the pieces seem to stem from the thematic shape of the five-note opening of *Von fremden Ländern und Menschen* (From Foreign Lands and Peoples). Often the first ascending sixth is left out, leaving a four-note

falling figure related to the “Clara motto” that Schumann often used in his compositions. Theorist Rudolph Reti went so far as to call the *Kinderscenen* a theme with variations, the “theme” comprising not only the opening figure of the first piece but two of its subsequent motives as well. While some of his conclusions stretch credibility to the limit, there is no doubt that the miniatures are bound together as a definite structural unit by more than their program.

Each of the 13 little pieces is a simple example of ternary or binary form. Schumann’s titles, whether added before or after the pieces’ completion (a matter of some discussion), are brought out in the music by a wealth of details. *Bittendes Kind* (Pleading Child) is left still entreating by an unresolved chord (dominant seventh) at the close; the famous *Träumerei* (Reverie) compresses a whole world within the rise and fall of the opening four-bar phrase; Schumann chose the key of G-sharp minor to intensify *Fast zu ernst* (Almost Too Serious); *Fürchtenmachen* (Frightening) is illustrated by unexpected tempo changes and accents; *Der Dichter spricht* (The Poet Speaks), a typical Schumann epilogue, contains a “recitative” (a free unmetred declamation), and ends peacefully. It was perhaps this final piece that Schumann did not include in his original count of 12, as it is not based on a simple child’s subject, but is rather the poet’s comment or reflection after the child has gone to sleep.

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

(b. Semyonovo, Starorussky, 1873; d. Beverly Hills, California, 1943)
Prelude in B-flat Major, Op. 23, No. 2
Prelude in G Minor, Op. 23, No. 5

Though the uncanny popularity of Rachmaninoff’s first Prelude in C-sharp minor bedeviled him all his life, it did provide the impetus for more preludes—ones he liked much better. “When I learned of the wide success of this little work,” wrote the composer, “I composed a series of 10 preludes, my Opus 23, and took the precaution to have them copyrighted by a German publisher. I think them far better music than my first...but the public has shown no

disposition to share my belief. I cannot tell whether my judgment is at fault or whether the existence of the copyright has acted as a blight on their popularity.”

Second only to the C-sharp minor Prelude in public appeal, the *Alla marcia* Prelude No. 5 in G minor was the first of the Opus 23 set to be written, in 1901. The remaining nine were completed in 1903, while Rachmaninoff and his wife Natalia were awaiting the birth of their first child. In February 1903, before the set was complete, Rachmaninoff played three of the Preludes in concert—definitely No. 5, and though there was a discrepancy in the press about which were the other two, very possibly it was Nos. 1 and 2.

The influence of Chopin is to be felt throughout the Opus 23 set, though the idea of completing 24 preludes, one in each major and minor key as Chopin did, evolved only with Rachmaninoff’s addition of the set of thirteen Preludes, Op. 32, in 1910. Prelude No. 2 in B-flat major has often been compared to Chopin’s *Revolutionary Étude*, Op. 10, No. 12, on account of its dramatic figuration and commanding sweep. Here as in many of his Preludes, Rachmaninoff contrasts a lovely central episode with the dynamic outer sections. The piece goes out in a blaze of octaves in both hands.

The famous *Alla marcia* Prelude No. 5 generates instant excitement with its pounding martial rhythm, which permeates both outer sections. Chopin’s F-sharp minor Polonaise, Op. 45, No. 5, may have planted the seed for this Prelude. In Rachmaninoff’s second section, which breathes the same air as his recently completed Second Piano Concerto, expressive melody and counter-melody flow over arpeggiated accompaniment. Of special note is the way in which he brings back the *Alla marcia* theme by leading it through a number of foreign keys before arriving triumphantly in the home key. The piece closes with a fleet disappearing act.

FRANZ LISZT

(b. Raiding, Hungary, 1811; d. Bayreuth, Germany, 1886)
 Petrarch Sonnet No. 104, *Années de pèlerinage*, No. 2
 Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 in C-sharp
 Minor, (Horowitz Transcription)

Liszt's three Petrarch sonnets form part of his collection *Années de pèlerinage, deuxième année, Italie* (Years of Pilgrimage, second year, Italy), composed between 1837 and 1849, though not published until 1858. Whereas the first book of the *Années de pèlerinage* (Swiss) had been concerned mainly with evocations of nature, the second book dealt with works of art—both literary and visual—that Liszt had encountered on his travels in Italy with Marie d'Agoult. His *Sonetti del Petrarca* were inspired by three of the best known sonnets in Petrarch's *Canzoniere*: *Benedetto sia 'l giorno* (No. 47), *Pace non trovo* (No. 104), and *I vidi in terra angelici costumi* (No. 123). Liszt had originally set them as songs for high tenor voice, then for piano solo, then revised them again for the *Années*. He even returned to them many years later, making "simpler" versions for medium tenor or baritone.

Taken as a group, the various versions provide fascinating insight into Liszt's transcription procedures. Formally the piano pieces, with some divergences from the songs, loosely follow the structure of Petrarch's sonnets with introduction, interludes and coda. Sonnet 104 begins with an agitated ascent that introduces the main melody, which Liszt presents three times in different guises (the various versions of the piece differ significantly in form). The basically lyrical melody is subjected to occasional tempo changes and pianistic outbursts that suggest the sonnet's images of a restless search for peace. A recitative-like passage introduces the coda, which dies away quietly.

Petrarch Sonnet No. 104

I find no peace, yet make no war;
 I fear yet hope, I burn yet am ice;
 I fly in the heavens, but lie on the earth;
 I hold nothing, but embrace the whole world.

One imprisons me, who neither frees nor holds me;
 nor keeps me for herself, nor loosens the noose;
 Love does not slay me, nor unshackle me;
 Love wishes me not to live, but leaves me in torment.

I see without eyes, and have no tongue but cry,
 I long to perish, yet I beg for aid;
 I hate myself, but love another.

I feed on sadness, yet I weeping I laugh;
 death and life repel me equally.
 I am in this state, Woman, because of You.

Liszt had been enthralled by Gypsies and their music ever since childhood in his native Hungary. In 1839–40 his interest bore fruit in a series of piano pieces called Hungarian National Melodies, which he began revising as Hungarian Rhapsodies in 1848. Rhapsodies Nos. 1 and 2 were published in 1851 and Nos. 3–15 in 1853; he added four more between 1882 and 1886. In his remarkable book *The Gypsies and Their Music in Hungary* (1859), Liszt clearly associated the rhapsody both with its roots in the recitation of ancient epic poetry and with nationalistic expression. In making a "national epic" out of Gypsy music and calling the resulting rhapsodies "Hungarian," Liszt had unwittingly stirred up an enormous hornet's nest. To the world it made the Gypsies appear the true representatives of Hungarian music, which offended native Hungarians. Public wrangling over the issue initially hurt the fortunes of the Hungarian Rhapsodies, but they had their supporters, including Bartók, who said their musical material "could not have been handled with greater beauty or genius."

Ironically, modern research has shown that some of Liszt's melodies actually were Magyar folk melodies, though he had learned them through Gypsy improvisations. He succeeded remarkably well in transcribing for piano the sounds of the Gypsy orchestra—solo violin, clarinets, cimbalom (a stringed instrument struck with two wood sticks) and strings.

Rhapsody No. 2, dedicated to Hungarian patriot Count Lázsló Teleky, is based on a Romanian theme. Its grand, slow introduc-

tion exudes solemnity as does the opening section of the *lassan* (slow first part), but a graceful lightness ensues. One passage in this second section admirably imitates the delicate embellishments of a cimbalom. The majestic introduction returns before a variation of the *lassan* and reappears deep in the bass before the lively *friska* (fast dancelike second part). Despite its sometimes comic demeanor, this *friska* contains myriad pianistic challenges, including a kind of repeated-note “étude” and thundering chromatic passages of octaves in both hands.

The awe-inspiring Vladimir Horowitz liked to perform several of Liszt’s Hungarian Rhapsodies in his own dazzling transcriptions. In No. 2 he retained the *lassan* almost unchanged, but added embellishments—including his own spectacular cadenza—in the already challenging *friska*.

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