

Monday, May 2, 2022 at 7:30**Evgeny Kissin piano**

- J.S. BACH** Toccatà and Fugue in D
(trans. Carl minor, BWV 565 (c. 1704)
Tausig)
- WOLFGANG** Adagio in B minor, K.540
AMADEUS (1788)
MOZART
- LUDWIG VAN** Sonata No. 31 in A-flat major,
BEETHOVEN Opus 110 (1822)
 Moderato cantabile
 molto espressivo
 Allegro molto
 Adagio ma non troppo
 —Fuga: Allegro ma non
 troppo

Intermission

- FRÉDÉRIC** Mazurka in B-flat major, Opus
CHOPIN 7, no.1 (1830–32)
 Mazurka in G minor, Opus
 24, no.1 (1833)
 Mazurka in C major, Opus 24,
 no.2
 Mazurka in C minor, Opus 30,
 no.1 (1837)
 Mazurka in B minor, Opus 30,
 no.2
 Mazurka in C major, Opus 33,
 no.3 (1838)
 Mazurka in B minor, Opus 33,
 no.4
 Andante spianato and
 Grande Polonaise, Opus 22
 (1830–36)

Toccatà and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)

(transcribed by Carl Tausig)

Possibly the most familiar organ work in the repertory, the Toccata and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565 would have disappeared altogether were it not for a single manuscript copy from about 1730 or thereabouts, made by organist Johann Ringk. This was the copy that, warts and all, provided the basis of the first published edition in 1833. Felix Mendelssohn's acclaimed 1840 performance on organ led to piano transcriptions by virtuosi such as Carl Tausig (whose version we hear in this performance), and, a century later, to the grand Leopold Stokowski orchestration that opens Walt Disney's 1940 *Fantasia*.

The work dates from the beginning of Bach's career, and could have been written as early as 1704, when he was still a teenager. The North German tradition of free-form, quasi-improvisatory playing (expressed by the label toccata) is very much in evidence throughout, even in the fluid central fugue with its interludes and relatively casual attitude towards the number of voices. As Bach biographer Karl Geiringer puts it, "The work was written by an organist with so deep an insight into the possibilities of the instrument that he was able to produce the most powerful effects without unduly taxing the player's technical abilities. In its intensity and exuberance this is clearly a product of Bach's youth, but there is no groping and uncertainty in it."—**Scott Foglesong**

Adagio in B minor for Piano, K.540

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–91)

On the whole, the most personal and interesting music that Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart wrote for solo piano is to be found in his lesser-known pieces such as the fantasias, rondos, variations, and other standalone works, including the Adagio in B minor, K.540. The gravely beautiful Adagio, which Mozart entered into the catalogue he kept of his own works on March 19, 1788, brims with darkly chromatic harmony, dramatic hand-crossings, and coolly elegant ornamentation. Framed within the key of B minor, a tonality not often found in Mozart's output, the piece unfolds in a loose sonata-form, anchored by the mournful opening theme, which returns in multiple guises. A notable shift comes near the work's close, as Mozart opens the shutters to let in the bright light of B major, casting aside the prevailing gloom. The pianist Vladimir Horowitz was more effusive in his assessment, remarking in 1986:

It is a truly extraordinary work. The chromatic harmonies in the development section foreshadow Wagner! In this respect, Mozart laid the harmonic groundwork for future generations of composers as far as Tchaikovsky and Verdi. The opening is identical in mood, texture and simplicity to the Prelude from *Traviata*, and is equally romantic.

Where Horowitz hears pre-echoes of Verdi and Wagner, other listeners may find themselves recalling the *Moments musicaux* of Franz Schubert. Whether we choose to acknowledge Mozart's Adagio as a harbinger of musical Romanticism is up for interpretation, but we can still be moved by its exquisite and self-contained musical world.

—After notes by Michael Steinberg and Steven Ziegler

Sonata No. 31 in A-flat major for Piano, Opus 110

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

The Opus 110 Piano Sonata of Ludwig van Beethoven displays many of the characteristics of the composer's late style: forms either pared down to their bare essence or disassembled and reassembled in new guises; the extensive use of advanced counterpoint; the importation of theatrical elements such as recitative, aria, and even popular songs into instrumental genres; extreme contrasts that test the boundaries of coherence; novel instrumental sonorities; and a dramatically expanded emotional range. Unified by motives that recur throughout the work, Opus 110 is in some ways a one-movement sonata despite its overt division into three contrasting movements.

Beethoven's indication of *con amabilità* (with amiability) in the very first measure could very well apply to the entire first movement. A melody no sooner gets launched before it pauses on a questioning trill; it then opens up into a long-lined theme that dissolves into shimmering arpeggios that sweep softly over the wide spans of the keyboard. The secondary theme is a sturdier affair, marked by solid left-hand chords and a constantly ascending right-hand melody, soon followed by an almost resigned-sounding closing theme. The simple development states the primary theme successively in several keys before giving way to a significantly expanded recapitulation, in which the fluid arpeggios form the accompaniment to the primary theme. The arpeggios return for a coda, marked *leggiermente* (lightly) and which ends, after a fleeting moment of angst, with a pair of delicate A-flat major chords.

The Allegro molto is a scherzo—although unmarked as such—that crackles with broad humor despite its minor mode. One popular theory has it that the quiet opening phrase alludes to the ditty “*Unsa Kätz häd Katzln ghabt*” (Our cat has had kittens) and is then answered with a *forte* shout, joined near the end of the exposition by the raucous song “*Ich bin lüderlich, du bist lüderlich*”—loosely translated as “I’m a slob, you’re a slob.”

In the Adagio, one of Beethoven's most remarkable adaptations of operatic idioms, the piano is called upon to mimic a human voice; extensive dynamic markings, meticulously-notated tempo changes, and precise pedal indications all help the performer to achieve the appropriately otherworldly effect.

Just as in the opera house, the recitative leads directly to the Arioso dolente, an utterance of transcendent beauty and harmonic mystery. The arioso proceeds without pause to the fugue, its subject drawn clearly from the primary theme of the first movement. Poetic rather than monumental, the fugue reaches a mighty climax and then descends again to the Arioso dolente, now in the key of G minor and filled with desolation. Heartbreak intensifies and the “dark night of the soul” is at hand. But the fugue subject returns, at first whisper-quiet and inverted (upside-down) from its original guise. Beethoven tells us: “*nach und nach sich neu belebend*”—that is, little by little coming to new life. What follows is a dazzling display of formal fugal devices, but such technicalities pale before the cumulative sweep and radiance of the music. A shower of incandescence arrives by way of A-flat major arpeggios, and the sonata concludes in what is surely one of the most optimistic endings in all Beethoven.—**S.F.**

Selected Mazurkas from Opus 7, 24, 30, and 33

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810–49)

A mazurka is a Polish dance named for the Mazovia region: in a triple meter, it moves the accent to the second or third beat, like a waltz with a hitch in the middle. This characteristic rhythm can be brought to nearly any tempo, resulting in a taxonomy of traditional mazurkas from the exhausting *oberekto* to the slinky *kujawiak*.

On November 1, 1830, the young Frédéric Chopin left Warsaw for a concert tour to Vienna and was abroad during the November Uprising against the Russian Empire. Months later, Chopin traveled to Stuttgart, where he was shocked to learn that the Polish rebellion had failed. He then made his way to Paris, joining thousands of Polish refugees, including many writers, artists, and musicians. Chopin wrote and published most of his mazurkas in exile, reinterpreting a Polish folk dance for performance in Parisian salons. He would never return to his beloved homeland.—**Benjamin Pesetsky**

Andante spianato and Grande Polonaise, Opus 22

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810–49)

The Andante spianato and Grande Polonaise dates in part to Chopin's time in Vienna, to just the moment when he was breaking through to critical acclaim. (Some scholars believe he began it even before leaving Poland.) The second section of this two-part work, the Grande Polonaise in E-flat major, was one of the earliest of Chopin's polonaises. The composer probably performed his Grande Polonaise in E-flat when it was new in 1830, but it seems not to have taken its final form until 1834, when he harnessed it to the Andante spianato in G major, which he had just then composed. By that time he was settled in Paris, and he unveiled the complete, bipartite work at one of the Concerts du Conservatoire in Paris on April 26, 1835. He originally presented the Andante spianato and Grande Polonaise in a form for solo piano with orchestra. (Some editions present the second part under the rubric "Grande Polonaise brillante.") The orchestra's role was minor; it participated not at all in the G major Andante, played the resounding chords of the transition that provides the necessary modulation from G to E-flat, and then provided a demure accompaniment during the polonaise. That's how the work was first published, in 1836, but it was quickly followed by alternate versions for piano quartet and then just solo piano. The transition was easily accomplished; Chopin kept the entire solo part intact and then added to it by arranging the few orchestral passages to make them idiomatic to the keyboard. Today this piece is almost always heard as a solo piano work, although many recordings of the original version are available.

Early Chopin commentators heard something liquid in the Andante spianato (which means "level," "even," or "smoothed out"). Frederick Niecks, in his *Frederick Chopin as a Man and a Musician* (1888), wrote: "It makes one think of a lake on a calm bright summer day. A boat glides over the pellucid, unruffled surface of the water, by and by halts at a shady spot by the shore, or by the side of some island, then continues its course, and finally returns to its moorings." James Huneker's *Chopin: The Man and his Music* (1900) similarly mused on "a barcarolle, scarcely a ripple of emotion disturbs the mirrored calm of this lake." After such serenity the polonaise sounds all the more extroverted.—**James M. Keller**

EVGENY KISSIN's musicality, the depth and poetic quality of his interpretations, and his extraordinary virtuosity have earned him the veneration and admiration deserved only by one of the most gifted classical pianists of his generation. He was born in Moscow in 1971 and began to play by ear and improvise on the piano at the age of two. At six years old, he entered the Moscow Gnessin School of Music, where he was a student of Anna Pavlovna Kantor, who has been his only teacher. At the age of ten, he made his concerto debut playing Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Piano Concerto, K.466, and gave his first solo recital in Moscow one year later. He came to international attention in 1984 when, at the age of twelve, he performed both of Frédéric Chopin's piano concertos in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory with the Moscow State Philharmonic. This concert was recorded live by Melodia, and a two-LP album was released the following year. Melodia proceeded to release five more LPs of live performances in Moscow.

This season, Mr. Kissin gives solo recitals in Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Basel, Madrid, and other European cities. He also returns to Asia, where he gives solo recitals in Japan and South Korea, as well as to North America, where he performs in Vancouver, Cleveland, Chicago, Philadelphia, and at Carnegie Hall.

Mr. Kissin has been awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Music by the Manhattan School of Music, the Shostakovich Award, an Honorary Membership of the Royal Academy of Music in London, and an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from the Hong Kong University. His newest release is an album featuring Beethoven sonatas on Deutsche Grammophon. He made his debut under San Francisco Symphony auspices in 1994.