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Arsen Jamkotchian
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CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY

Hall-Musco
Conservatory of Music

presents a

Senior Recital

Arsen Jamkotichian, piano

February 8, 2015 ■ 5:00 P.M.

Salmon Recital Hall

Program

Piano Sonata Op. 82 No. 6 in A Major

- i. Allegro moderato
- ii. Allegretto
- iii. Tempo di valzer lentissimo
- iv. Vivace

Sergei Prokofiev
(1891 – 1953)

~Intermission~

Etude Op. 25 No. 12 in C Minor ("Ocean")

Frederic Chopin
(1810 – 1849)

Piano Sonata Hob. XVI-46 No. 35 in A-flat Major

- i. Moderato
- ii. Menuetto
- iii. Rondo. Presto

Joseph Haydn
(1732 – 1809)

Verdi Paraphrase – Il Trovatore ("Miserere")

Franz Liszt
(1811 – 1886)

Encore:

Shostakovich - Polka

Chopin - Nocturne

This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance degree. Arsen Jamkotchian is a student of Dr. Grace Fong.

Program Notes

Sergei Prokofiev

Sergey Prokofiev (1891 – 1953) was one of the greatest composers that came out of the Soviet Union. He began his first piano and composition lessons at the age of four. He showed such talent that at the age of 12 he went to study with composer and member of the "Mighty Russian Five," Alexander Glazunov, at the Moscow Conservatory. It was during these years that Prokofiev composed his etudes and first two piano concertos, to which audiences reacted terribly negatively, leaving halfway through the performances yelling "To hell with this futuristic music!" and "The cats on the roof make better music!"

In 1918 Prokofiev travelled to the USA, probably because of the gradually declining condition of Russia and the dictatorship that was to come. Prokofiev toured throughout the U.S. and Canada giving concerts. According to him, however, it was a "gradual process of failure" since Sergei Rachmaninoff had beat him there and was already the popular icon of the people. Therefore, in 1922 Prokofiev moved to Paris which at the time was the center of the arts. Painters and composers and novelists of all sorts were located in Paris. There, he spent most of his time composing and occasionally travelling to Moscow to give concerts. He made note of the declining conditions there, but ironically enough decided to move back to the Soviet Union in 1936, and stayed there until his death.

Sonata No. 6 in A Major, Op. 82 (1940)

The sixth piano sonata was composed by Prokofiev after he had composed an absolutely gorgeous cantata for Stalin's 60th birthday in 1939. He expresses his true emotions and feelings towards Stalin in the piano sonata since he was forced to compose the cantata for the same man who has been passing measures against his music. Therefore, this piece is the most dissonant and ugly piece Prokofiev had composed yet. It is sometimes referred to as the first of three "War Sonatas," since it was composed during the Second World War. The first movement is absolutely tonally unstable since both A major and A minor are established. The piece frequently modulates to new keys, and contains ear-piercing dissonances, depicting the instability of the piece and the time period. The second movement is more waltz-like with an almost comical melody. The third movement is much deeper and tragic.

Frederic Chopin

Chopin (1810 – 1849) was a Polish composer and pianist known for his unique sense of melody coupled with an adventurous harmonic sense. He composed primarily for the piano, with about two hundred solo piano pieces, six works for piano and orchestra, about

twenty songs, and four chamber works. His sense of melody and adventurous harmonies represents the essence of music from the Romantic era. His inclusion of Polish musical elements sparked people's curiosity all over Europe. His mazurkas and polonaises, particularly, were filled with the spirit of Poland. His music was exotic. Chopin moved to Paris in late September of 1831, just after the November 1830 Uprising, or Polish-Russian War, was crushed by the Russians. He spent the rest of his life there.

In Paris, Chopin met some of the leading musicians of the world, including Liszt, Rossini, Meyerbeer, and Berlioz. His circle included the leading authors and painters of the time as well, including Adam Mickiewicz, Eugene Delacroix, and Heinrich Heine. The only masters he looked up to, however, were Mozart and Bach. He gave his students much Mozart and Bach to learn, kept a metronome on his piano, and anytime rhythmic liberties were taken would go into a tantrum. The majority of his income came from teaching children of the wealthy. He considered himself an aristocrat. Students would enter his studio and place the money on the mantelpiece as he looked out the window. He was a gentleman, and gentlemen never cared for vulgar business transactions.

From 1842 onwards, Chopin's health began to diminish drastically. Chopin sent a note to a friend: "The three most celebrated doctors on the island have seen me. One sniffed at what I spat, the second tapped where I spat, the third sounded me and listened as I spat. The first said I was dead, the second that I am dying, the third that I'm going to die." Indeed, Chopin died on the 17th of October, 1849 among what friends and family he had left.

Etude Op. 25 No. 12 in C Minor ("Ocean") (1837)

This is the final etude Chopin composed and published. Each etude focuses on a technical difficulty and develops it. His etudes were also the first to show significant artistic quality, hence creating the *concert etude*. This etude was dedicated to Madame la Comtesse d'Agout, the wife of Franz Liszt. It consists of rising and falling arpeggios. Coincidentally, the harmonic structure of the first few measures is similar to that of Bach's second prelude from the first book of The Well-Tempered Clavier. The nickname "The Ocean," however, is not one given by Chopin. Nicknames were given to the etudes to encourage the imagination to fabricate epic scenarios related to these studies.

Joseph Haydn

Joseph Haydn (1732 – 1809) was born in Rohrau, Austria to a very musical family. Along with being a composer Haydn was also a teacher and freelance musician. Haydn is known for his very delicate tone and joyful style along with a strict coherence to classical forms. He composed his piano sonatas mostly for his students and women, and nearly all were for the harpsichord and some for the pianoforte. He was *the* composer of the period. In his own way, he was the typical figure of the Enlightenment: religious but not too religious, daring but not too daring, intelligent but not aggressively so, adventurous but not nearly as

revolutionary as Mozart. Everything was quite simply intellectual and emotionally proportioned. He was a very kind person. He made virtually no enemies, was even-tempered, generous, had a good sense of humor, and most importantly, handled his love affairs like a gentlemen. He was very honestly modest as well. Whenever Mozart's name would come up, he would say "My friends often flatter me about my talent, but he was far above me."

Haydn lived during a period of patronage, meaning in order to make a living, musicians and artists in general had to be supported by a patron. Therefore, Haydn's most important position was at the court of the Esterhazy family. The Esterhazy family was a wealthy Hungarian family that had a taste for the arts and supported musicians as well as painters. Haydn was at first responsible for musical archives and performed as a leader and soloist. He was later promoted Kapellmeister and was in charge of composing large-scale vocal works as well as supervising the production of operas. Also around this time he became friends with Mozart and they would have "quartet parties" where they'd get together and play their own chamber music. Haydn's strict use of sonata-allegro form and his organization of piano sonatas greatly influenced later composers such as Beethoven. Even Beethoven dedicated his first sonata to Haydn.

As Haydn grew older, his health began fluctuating and eventually reached a point where he was physically unable to compose. The Esterhazy family still kept him as Kapellmeister until the very end. His servants cared for him as much as they could, and he received many visitors and public honors during his final years. He died peacefully at the age of 77, on the 31st of May 1809.

Piano Sonata Hob. XVI-46, No. 35 in A-flat Major (1767 – 1770)

Haydn's music is very well balanced and relies on the predominant language of music of the Classical period. Most of his sonatas follow the "sonata-allegro" form, which was a framework for how pieces should be organized harmonically and melodically. The same form was used by other Classical composers such as Mozart and Beethoven. Haydn's short melodies are arranged in balanced periods over light accompaniment with some hints of polyphony. Haydn really makes the most of each melody through extensive variation and continuous development.

Franz Liszt

Franz Liszt (1811 – 1886) is probably the most prominent figure in the history of not only piano music but piano performance practice as well. He brought the piano to the big stage to replace the orchestra and created the concept of a public piano performance. One way in which he did this was to transcribe Beethoven's symphonies for piano solo, showing that the piano is capable of the same power and sound as an orchestra. He even began certain

performance practices such as playing music from memory and having the piano sideways in order to allow the audience to see the technical difficulties of the piece. He was quite simply a superstar at the time; Handsome and incredibly talented.

Verdi Paraphrase – Il Trovatore (“Misere”) (1859)

This transcription of the aria “Il Misere” from Verdi’s opera “Il Trovatore” is one of many transcriptions of Liszt. Liszt was such a genius and so familiar with the piano, that often when amongst people he would be asked to play an aria or a symphony by any composer. He would instantly transcribe it for the piano and perform it. Verdi’s “Il Trovatore” is about two men who fall in love with the same woman, one being a lord and of high power, and the other a gypsy with whom the woman happens to be in love with. In this aria, the woman is singing her heart out to the gypsy who was captured that day before and has been locked in prison. When the man hears the singing of his lover he responds with his own words of anguish. Liszt, of course, added his own stylistic and virtuosic elements.

Almost immediately after his arrival, the Soviet government passed measures against his music as well as the music of Dimitri Shostakovich and Aram Khachaturian, and demanded that their music represent “socialism.” Prokofiev continued composing, his music containing free tonal melodies with non-musical function and lyrical expressivity. In 1946 however, artists of the Soviet Union were attacked once again with “Zhdanovschina,” a cultural policy passed by communist party manager Andrei Zhdanov. This called for stricter government control of art. This had a devastating effect on Prokofiev. Later, in 1948 Prokofiev’s wife was also arrested for “espionage” when she tried to send money to her mother in Spain. Prokofiev’s health slowly began to decline and he withdrew from musical life, and died the same day as Joseph Stalin in 1953. Since he lived close to Red Square he could not be carried out for the funeral service.

-Arsen Jamkotchian

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