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Graduate Recital: Michail Konstantinos Chalkiopoulos, piano

Michail Konstantinos Chalkiopoulos

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Graduate Recital:
Michail Konstantinos Chalkiopoulos, piano

Hockett Family Recital Hall
Sunday, April 22nd, 2018
3:00 pm



ITHACA COLLEGE

School of Music

Program

Piano Sonata in A Minor, D784 (1823)
I. Allegro giusto
II. Andante
III. Allegro vivace

Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)

Intermission

from *13 Preludes*, Op. 32 (1910)
No. 10 in b minor
No. 12 in g-sharp minor

Sergei Rachmaninoff
(1873-1943)

from *Préludes, Book I* (1909)
IV. "Les sons et les parfums tournent
dans l'air du soir" (Ch. Baudelaire)
VI. Des pas sur la neige
VII. Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest

Claude Debussy
(1862-1918)

Translations

Harmonies du Soir- Evening Harmony

(Translated by Michail Konstantinos Chalkiopoulos)

HARMONIE DU SOIR

Voici venir les temps où vibrant sur sa tige
Chaque fleur s'évapore ainsi qu'un encensoir;
Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir;
Valse mélancolique et langoureux vertige!

Chaque fleur s'évapore ainsi qu'un encensoir;
Le violon frémit comme un cœur qu'on afflige;
Valse mélancolique et langoureux vertige!
Le ciel est triste et beau comme un grand reposoir.

Le violon frémit comme un cœur qu'on afflige,
Un cœur tendre, qui hait le néant vaste et noir!
Le ciel est triste et beau comme un grand reposoir;
Le soleil s'est noyé dans son sang qui se fige.

Un cœur tendre, qui hait le néant vaste et noir,
Du passé lumineux recueille tout vestige!
Le soleil s'est noyé dans son sang qui se fige...
Ton souvenir en moi luit comme un ostensor!

— Charles Baudelaire

EVENING HARMONY

Here comes the season where vibrant on its stem
Each flower releases its perfume like a censer;
The sounds and the perfumes swirl in the evening air;
A melancholy valse and a languorous dizziness!

Each flower releases its perfume like a censer;
The violin trembles like a tormented heart;
A melancholy valse and a languorous dizziness!
The sky is sorrowful and beautiful like a great altar of repose.

The violin trembles like a tormented heart;
A tender heart, which hates the vast and dark void!
The sky is sorrowful and beautiful like a great altar of repose.
The sun has drowned in its own freezing blood.

A tender heart, which hates the vast and dark emptiness,
Gathers every trace from the luminous past!
The sun has drowned in its own freezing blood...
Your memory inside me shines like a monstenance!

— Charles Baudelaire

Program Notes

Schubert Sonata in a minor Opus post. 143 D. 784 (1823)

As Robert Winter writes in the Oxford Music online entry about Schubert, “on 28 February 1823 Schubert wrote a letter to Mosel with which he enclosed the overture and third act of his now completed opera *Alfonso und Estrella*. First soliciting Mosel's opinion, he then asked if Mosel might write him a letter of recommendation to Weber in Dresden, where Schubert also hoped for a performance. But dwarfing the main text of this otherwise routine letter is the opening sentence, which contains the first surviving mention of a development that altered Schubert's life permanently: ‘Kindly forgive me if I am compelled to inconvenience you with another letter so soon, but the circumstances of my health still forbid me to leave the house’. Although Schubert remained circumspect about the nature of his malady, the scattered references to its symptoms during his lifetime suggest that it was almost certainly the venereal disease syphilis. Syphilis was common in Europe throughout the 19th century; researchers have estimated that in some cities it afflicted as many as one in every five inhabitants. Those particularly unfortunate could contract syphilis through a single sexual encounter; more commonly, it gained a foothold in those practising a promiscuous lifestyle; and that such a lifestyle led to Schubert's illness is suggested by accounts from those who knew him personally. That Schubert's nature contained a strong element of sexual excess was long ignored or concealed by his biographers. Many of the relevant documents were known to biographers in the 1850s; but it was only in the late 1980s that scholars brought the contradictions in the composer's personality into the open.”

Schubert's first movement of the sonata in a minor D. 784 starts with a slow, numb and dark statement. The short and lamenting introductory phrases ending with a rest exhale a sense of finality. One that could be summed up in the following words: “Things Will Never Be The Same Again.” In other words, one feels an impending life or death experience.

The second movement presents a very distant blissful melody that is tormented every now and then by a dotted rhythm theme that implies an internal agony. The moments of light and darkness alternate and the movement fades away with a final restatement of the first two phrases leaving us with an unsettled feeling.

The third movement evolves along the line of manic triplets that rotate in an obsessive mode. The anger that was repressed in the second movement releases abruptly after moments of short, calm contemplation reaching [in the final bars an almost rageful state] that is captured in the octaves and full-volume a minor chords of the last two bars.

Rachmaninoff Preludes op.32 no.10 & 12 (1910)

Rachmaninoff Preludes no. 10 op. 32

Rachmaninov was inspired to compose prelude no. 10 in b minor after

seeing a painting of Arnold Böcklin named *The Return*. That was not the first time that the painter was an inspiration to the composer. The tone-poem for orchestra, *Isle of the Dead*, was named after the homonymous painting by Böcklin. The set of preludes op. 32 was composed in 1910. Prelude no. 10 in b minor seems to be intimately connected with the ideas of the painter. Böcklin painted *The Return* a few years before he died of tuberculosis so the term "return" can also be interpreted under a more philosophical perspective: The one of returning to ones own roots before the end comes, or the return of the soul to its source when it leaves the human body. The searching and harrowing dotted rhythm melody of this Rachmaninoff prelude marks a contemplative mode at the beginning and end of the piece, intersected by a chordal middle section of boiling agitation, longing and finally explosivity. One of the longest preludes from the set among with prelude in e minor and no 13 in d-flat.

Rachmaninoff Prelude no. 12 op. 32

A cold breeze of melancholy strikes through this whole prelude. It enters through the perpetual open fifths of the right hand while the same perpetuum evaporates rapidly in the last measures like a distant memory. It could be interpreted as a description of a Russian winter landscape through the open fifths of the right hand being juxtaposed to a sorrowful and warm melody in the left hand, like a battle of elements or an attempt to equalize internal opposite forces in order to find inner peace. All the preludes op. 32 were composed in Ivanovka where Rachmaninoff spent two or three summers after he declined to renew his American contract for further performing engagements since he was so tired that he was loathing in the idea. This decision provided him with more time to compose. We can suspect that since the composer was returning to Russia only for short periods of time (summers) his longing for his home-country was increasing. This prelude could represent Rachmaninoff reminiscing about his motherland and admiring its beauty from another perspective as he was spending time in Ivanovka

Debussy Preludes IV,VI,VII (Book I)

No. IV "Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir -"
"The sounds and the perfumes swirl In the evening air": third line from the Baudelaire poem: "Evening Harmonies." (see translation)

Prelude no. 4 captures the essence of a poem by Charles Baudelaire exemplifying one of Debussy's many compositional talents: to instill within the music images and impressions from a poem (in this prelude but also in others pieces too). Through the usage of specific articulation, phrasing and dynamics, Debussy conveyed the

uniqueness of the moment or in other words “the magic of the moment.” This tendency was so evident in his music that it led to the designation of being “Impressionist,” a label Debussy was not very fond of. Instead he preferred the term “Symbolist” for various reasons: his close friend relationships with symbolist poets in particular (for ex. Stéphane Mallarmé). This prelude opens and closes with a gentle and colorful A major chordal theme that is used throughout the piece in different tonalities and under different dynamic contexts. The whole composition is full of mellow, colorful and fragrant sounds.

No. VI - Des pas sur la neige.

The music of this prelude is similar to the imagery that its title evokes. If the impression of this imagery could be summed up in three words they would probably be: static beauty, solitude and memories. Debussy used syncopated triplets as a rhythmic unit. Then, upon these recurring triplets he added a four-voice counterpoint. This counterpoint did not follow the traditional compositional style of the 16th and 18th century, but it was a more personal style that Debussy invented. A compositional invention for the purpose of imprinting the imagery of the snowy landscapes of the title in the music.

No. VII - Ce qu'a vu le Vent d'Ouest

Prelude no.7 was inspired from the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale “The Garden of Paradise.” The fairy tale narrates the story of the four winds (East, West, North and South) coming back to the cave where they live with their Mother (Nature) each of them narrating about their own experiences. The following excerpt from the fairy tale describes the West Wind as follows:

“But here comes my brother from the West; I like him best of all, for he has the smell of the sea about him, and brings in a cold, fresh air as he enters.”

“Is that the little Zephyr?” asked the prince.

“Yes, it is the little Zephyr,” said the old woman; “but he is not little now. In years gone by he was a beautiful boy; now that is all past.” He came in, looking like a wild man, and he wore a slouched hat to protect his head from injury. In his hand he carried a club, cut from a mahogany tree in the American forests, not a trifle to carry.

“Whence do you come?” asked the mother.”

"I come from the wilds of the forests, where the thorny brambles form thick hedges between the trees; where the water-snake lies in the wet grass, and mankind seem to be unknown."

"What were you doing there?"

"I looked into the deep river, and saw it rushing down from the rocks. The water drops mounted to the clouds and glittered in the rainbow. I saw the wild buffalo swimming in the river, but the strong tide carried him away amidst a flock of wild ducks, which flew into the air as the waters dashed onwards, leaving the buffalo to be hurled over the waterfall. This pleased me; so I raised a storm, which rooted up old trees, and sent them floating down the river."

"And what else have you done?" asked the old woman.

"I have rushed wildly across the savannahs; I have stroked the wild horses, and shaken the cocoanuts from the trees. Yes, I have many stories to relate; but I need not tell everything I know. You know it all very well, don't you, old lady?" And he kissed his mother so roughly, that she nearly fell backwards. Oh, he was, indeed, a wild fellow. Now in came the South Wind, with a turban and a flowing Bedouin cloak...)"

Debussy tried to capture many of the features of the west wind giving an emphasis to its wild catastrophic action. As Robert Schmitz states in his book *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*: "This Prelude is indeed an illustration of the very relative nature of direction, for to a Frenchman a west wind is the very opposite from what it would be to a New Yorker!"