

MASTER'S CHAMBER AND SOLO RECITALS

by

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THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

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(Piano Performance)

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Kevin Wong, Pianist

Masters Degree Chamber Music Recital

April 2nd, 2005

C major Piano Trio

Mozart

Piano trio, opus 49 in d minor

Mendelssohn

Suite no.2 for two pianos

Rachmaninoff

Recital performed with special guests Alexandra Sia (cello), Alisa van Dijk (violin) and Denise Ng (piano). In partial fulfillment of a Masters Degree in Music majoring in piano performance.

Programme notes

Beethoven: *Six Bagatelles opus 126*

The six bagatelles, opus 126, is one of the last pieces that Beethoven completed for piano. Beethoven published three sets of Bagatelles: the seven bagatelles in Opus 33 (1802), the eleven Bagatelles of Opus 119 (1821-23) and the six bagatelles found in Opus 126 (1825). While his later sonatas defined Beethoven as a master of monumental works, the bagatelles define him as a master of the small form. In the opus 126 set, Beethoven demonstrates his ability to convey a broad variety of characters and moods within a miniature structure.

The first bagatelle is based on a ternary form comprising of a different arrangement of the voices in the repeat of the A section giving a noble and broader dimension than the initial idea. The second bagatelle features a dialogue between an antagonistic and cantabile motif. The third bagatelle is arguably more substantial from a harmonic standpoint than many of his slow sonata movements. The fourth bagatelle features masterful melodic and harmonic twists. The fifth bagatelle is retrospective and contemplative in character and employs the use of some beautiful polyphonic textures. The sixth bagatelle consists of a beautifully crafted ländler-like andante section based loosely on a choral theme. However, this section is preceded by a brief presto passage which causes the andante section to emerge unexpectedly. At the conclusion of the bagatelle, the same presto breaks into the picture again as what could be the ephemeral condition of human existence or its ironic state in the midst of a more universal reality.
Pavane pour une Infante défunte: Ravel

Completed in 1899, Ravel's *Pavane pour une Infante défunte*, more commonly known as *Pavane for a dead princess* was dedicated to Princess Edmonde de Polignac. Structurally the composition is based on a rondo form. The accompaniment of the A section features an increase in complexity the second and third time it is stated. There are frequent occurrences of minor seconds in the harmonies of the accompaniment which creates some of the unsettling effects that Ravel desired. The mood of the pavane is gently sorrowful and peaceful.

Jeux d'eau: Ravel

It is generally understood that Ravel's *Jeux d'eau* depicts fountains, water games and playing in water. The piece is best described as a virtuosic tone-poem. It is clearly inspired by Liszt's *Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este*. According to Ravel the composition is inspired by the noise of water and by the musical sounds that one hears when one sprays water. The piece is based on motivic and thematic structures that are similar to ones found in sonata movements. However, it does not subject itself to a classical tonal structure.

Les Jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este: Liszt

This piece is the third work from year three of *Années de Pèlerinage* and depicts the fountains of Villa d'Este. It features impressionistic use of diatonic harmonies and had a strong influence on Ravel's *Jeux d'eau*. The first 2/3rds of the piece is written in the middle and upper range of the piano. Gradually the registration moves lower and it is not until the climatic section of the piece, that the bass frequencies are heard.

Ballade no.2 in b minor: Liszt

Completed in 1853, the 2nd ballade can be described as a work of epic proportions based on many episodic sections. Some of the unique characteristics of this composition include Liszt's method of repeating the opening section by repeating the first two themes down a half step, to b flat minor. Other notable features include a juxtaposition of the first theme, which depicts anguish and torment, with the second theme which has a heavenly and angelic quality. There is also an elaborate coda section that features a transformation of the opening theme into a grandiose B major section.

Two legends: Liszt

The title of the first legend translates into *St. Francis of Assisi preaching to the birds*. It is based on the well known passage from the *Little Flowers of St. Francis*. In his preface to this composition, Liszt described the difficulty of doing justice to the text because of "the narrow limits of musical expression possible in a work of small dimensions, written for an instrument so lacking in variety of accent and tone colour as the piano." This explains why Liszt suggests organ registration equivalencies in the score. Despite Liszt's concern for not depicting the text well, most pianists agree that he illustrates the subject matter brilliantly. The piece features the ingenious use of the colours found in the upper range of the instrument. Liszt uses the upper range of frequencies to depict the sounds and motions of the birds while a recitative theme, based on his setting of *St. Francis cantico del Sol*, depicts the sermon of St. Francis.

The second legend is entitled *St. Francois de Paule marchant sur les flot (St. Francis of Paola walking on the waves.)* The story conveys that St. Francis of Paola was refused admittance to a ferry boat crossing the Straits of Messina. The owner of the ferry remarked that "if St. Francis was truly a saint, let him walk on the water." Upon hearing this, St. Francis spread his cloak on the water and lifted up a part of it to make a sail. He then supported this with his staff like a mast and safely crossed over to the other side, arriving before the ferry boat. Liszt portrays the meaning of this text magnificently. The image of the foaming waves is carried out with use of octave tremolos and ascending and descending scales blended together with pedal. Virtuoso sections are used to portray the anger of the sea but ultimately St. Francis of Paola prevails. His success is depicted by a transformation of the opening theme into a majestic and victorious sounding chorale. The coda of the piece is based on a theme from *An den heiligen Franziskus von Paula*, which is a short work for male chorus.