

Date du recital/Date of recital:

le Samedi 25 novembre 2017, à 20 h / Saturday, November 25, 2017, 8 p.m.

Nom/Name:

Rebecca Reesor

Classe de/Class of:

Kyoko Hashimoto

These program notes are written by the student performing, and are presented by the student in partial fulfilment of the requirements of their course.

Ces notes de programme sont écrites par l'étudiant-interprète et sont présentées en tant que réalisation partielle descriptives de leur cours.

Toccate en doh mineur, BWV 911 / Toccata in C minor, BWV 911

J. S. Bach

1685-1750

*"With Bach, you have to think it terms of God. He's celebrating God and celebrating life...exploring man's relation to God" - Murray Periah*

Johann Sebastian Bach, Baroque German composer, is regarded as one of the most important composers in classical music history. Although his music did not receive due prominence in its time, it was revived in the 19th century and is still greatly influential today. Characteristic in much of his music are both the influence of Baroque dance and giving voice to a broad range of spiritual expression.

The Toccata in C minor, BWV 911, is one of seven written by Bach for the harpsichord during the early 1700's. They are virtuosic pieces which are free in form, stepping between improvisatory fantasies, chorales and fugues. These contrasting sections flow seamlessly from one to the other creating a unified, personal expression. The C minor Toccata is full of intensity from start, its opening improvisatory runs establishing the material of the entire work. The rising and falling gestures of the opening fantasy section give way to a beautifully lyrical chorale, which takes us to a powerful fugue. The fugue is triumphant and dance like taken through numerous key areas and registers, all which color the subject differently. It arrives at its finish with a flourish to the major key, which gives a sense that the turmoil of the opening has been worked through and resolved.

Sonate no. 15 en fa majeur, K. 494/533 / Sonata No. 15 in F Major, K. 494/533

W. A Mozart

1765-1791

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, from the Classical era, was a famous child prodigy as a violinist, fortepianist and composer. He wrote over 600 works in his lifetime across many genres, including chamber, keyboard, concertante, operatic and choral music. This sonata was written in 1788, near the end of his 18 piano sonatas. He had recently finished the comical yet dramatic opera, *Don Giovanni* (1787), and the next would be the opera buffa, *Cose fan tutte* (1789). In these years he was also writing string trios, quartets and piano quintets. One can see the musical influence of both genres in this 15<sup>th</sup> sonata.

Movements I and II were written in 1788, to which he added a rondo from 1786. He also added a fugal coda which provides a dramatic conclusion to the work. The first movement, marked Allegro, is a dynamic dialogue of two voices which takes us through three very contrasting themes. The Andante continues the duet with writing that evokes a string trio. Its counterpoint is delicately florid. The third movement is a Rondo: Allegretto, and is predominantly stylized as a solo voice with accompaniment. Its light vivacity rounds off the energy and lyricism of the first two movements.

Papillons

R. Schumann  
1810-1856

One of the greatest composers of the romantic era is Robert Schumann. He had intended to be a concert pianist, but injured his hand and thus turned his focus to composing. A large portion of his output is for the piano; he wrote exclusively for the instrument until 1840. Also from his pen are songs, chamber, orchestral and choral works and an opera. Schumann was known to have extreme depressive and elated periods as he aged, and he eventually died in a mental asylum. In general, his music is known for the great contrasts in mood and character. A conversation that is still ongoing in his music is whether his late compositional style was still musically rational, or if it was a result of a confused mind.

Literature was highly influential in Schumann's work, especially the work of Jean Paul Friedrich Richter (pen name Jean Paul). Jean Paul's writing style is characterized by its exaggerated sentimentality and digressions; even digressions within digressions. Schumann fell in love with Jean Paul's literature and it naturally influenced his musical writing. *Papillons* is the first composition to be directly linked to Jean Paul, and was inspired by the final scene of the novel *Flegeljahre*. Schumann writes:

*"I feel I must add a few words about the origin of the Papillons, for the thread that is meant to bind them together is scarcely visible. You will remember the final scene of Jean Paul's Flegeljahre: fancy dress ball – Walt – Vult – masks – Wina – Vult's dancing – exchange of masks – confessions – rage – revelations – hurry away – concluding scene, then the departing brother. Again and again I turned over the last page ...Almost without knowing, I found myself sitting at the piano, and one Papillon after another came into being." – Schumann, Letter to Ludwig Rellstab, 1931*

The story of *Flegeljahre* ("the awkward years") centres around twin brothers (Walt and Vult) who are in love with the same woman (Wina). This tension plays out in the last scene during a masked ball, which is the subject of *Papillons*. Of the twelve dance sequences in *Papillons* (mostly waltzes), only the last three are direct evocations of the novel's final scene. Although the first nine were written prior to his reading of the novel he explicitly states that the text underlines the music. The opening motive (which also closes the work) is the theme of Walt putting on his mask. The grand polonaise depicts the famous dance where Vult has put on Walt's costume to dance with Wina, as she unknowingly confesses her love for Walt. The last dance opens with a "grossvater tanz" (Grandfather dance), a traditional wedding dance which

represents Wina's love for Walt. As the piece closes, the Wina and Walt's themes overlay and fade away as Vult departs.

Préludes: Livre I & II (extraits) / Preludes: Books I & II (excerpts)

C. Debussy

1862-1918

The music of Debussy, a turn of the century French composer, encapsulates and evokes the sounds and senses of his time. He loved art, theatre and literature, and was heavily influenced by the contemporary symbolist circles, especially the emphasis on the esoteric, rejecting naturalism and realism. In his music, he is concerned not with extra-musical objects, but rather the moods evoked by them and his personal reactions to them. The palette of color he developed at the piano was unprecedented, characterized by his novel explorations in harmony, texture, tonality, touch and pedalling. Debussy's *Preludes* contain a great variety of "evocations" which range from caricatures and fairy tales to landscapes and vivid scenes.

There are no titles atop the *Preludes*, Debussy rather placed them at the end of each piece. It is commonly accepted that his intent is for the title to indicate what the music suggests, rather than dictate it. *Des pas sur la neige* (Footprints in the snow) is to be played "triste et lent," (sad and slow). Debussy is known to have described it as a melancholy, snowbound landscape. Listen for the footfalls, the stark expanse and the sighing melody. *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest* (What the west wind saw) is a tumultuous and animated piece ranging from the quietest to loudest of dynamics. Indications such as "plaintive and in the distance", "furious and rapid" and "outside and anxiously" paint different pictures of what a westerly wind can be. This prelude drew inspiration from the character Zephyr ("a west wind" in Danish) in "The Garden of Paradise" by Hans Christian Andersen. *Ondine* draws from the Scandinavian and Germanic folklore. Ondines are water nymphs who live in underwater crystal palaces. Debussy draws out images of water, dance, and sensuality throughout this prelude. *Feux d'artifice* (Fireworks) is the flashy finale of all the preludes. He would have seen magnificent fireworks on Bastille Day, France's national day, July 14. This prelude evokes all types of fireworks and colors, and the flashes of landscape illuminated by them. The French national anthem, "Marseillaise," is echoed at the close of the piece as the scene fades away.