

Date du récital/Date of recital: March 27th, 2018

Nom/Name: Nuné Melikian

Classe de/Class of: Andrew Wan

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 des critères de leur cours.

Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Written in 1802, the *Heiligenstadt Testament* is one of the most powerful confessions ever written when Beethoven noticed the first signs of his impending deafness. The document is full of Beethoven's powerful message of despair and his willingness to fight against his destiny. His **Sonata Op. 30 No. 2** was composed around this time and dedicated to Tsar Alexander I. It is a perfect depiction of man's strength facing invincible fate and is full of dramatic virtuosity and expressiveness. The choice of the c minor key is not accidental — the composer favored it for his most dramatic and meaningful compositions: in particular, his *Fifth Symphony* and the *Pathétique Sonata*. One of the particularities of this work and works from this period is the preciseness of dynamics and nuances marked by the composer.

The first movement, *Allegro con brio*, starts with a questioning piano melody, echoed by the violin. Becoming sort of a haunting theme, it reappears throughout the movement. The second theme is a dotted rhythm, mimicking toy soldiers marching — an apparent reference to the Russian military march. The development transforms the first motif and the marching theme. Numerous harmonic modulations lead to a coda with the affirmative dominance of the first theme.

The second movement, *Adagio cantabile*, written in A-flat major, comes as a contrasting retreat. Written in a rondo form, the principal theme is first announced by the piano, and then by the violin. Later on, the gentle character of the violin part gets interrupted by bursts of passages in the piano, creating an almost a bipolar effect. The singing mood becomes corrupted, while the violin melody changes to an expressive cantabile mood. The end of the movement returns both instruments to a cantabile ambiance, ending on gentle and fragile chords.

With its light and playful character, the *Scherzo* plays an intermezzo role: the movement consists of unexpected sforzandos and rhythmic charades. The *Trio* has a more enchanting mood, with a slight resemblance to a waltz. Full of sudden dynamic changes and agile passages, this C major movement lightens up the overall seriousness of the rest of the sonata.

The *Finale* is written in rondo-sonata form with four refrains. The dramatic mood of struggle from the first movement returns. Like the three other movements, the exposition is not repeated. Instead, the composer chooses to develop the main subject and transform it through harmonic alterations. Characterized by a bouncing dance theme with sudden dynamic changes, the development leads to a stunning *Presto* coda with dramatic eruptions in the final passages.

Albert Markov (1933-)

Albert Markov is one of the most successful violinists of his generation. A sought-after violin teacher currently teaching at the Manhattan School of Music, he is also a successful composer: G. Schirmer publishes his works. His books: *Violin Technique* and *Little Violinist* are recognized as important violin methods internationally. The Soviet composer Aram Khachaturian befriended Albert after he captured the second prize at the Queen Elisabeth Competition in 1957. After performing the Khachaturian Violin Concerto with the composer himself on the podium, they toured the Soviet Union and abroad extensively. Markov's interpretation of the concerto was greatly appreciated by Khachaturian and the two became long-time collaborators and friends.

Inspired by Khachaturian's then-popular ballet, Albert Markov composed the *Spartacus Rhapsody* in 1967. The former sent a copy of the score to the Sovetskaya Muzika publishing house with a personal note recommending they publish this work. The publication of the composition was released the same year. Using the Adagio theme from Khachaturian's concerto as the primary musical inspiration of the work, Markov add virtuosic ornaments to it while preserving its emotional and lyrical beauty. Written in rondo form, this work includes variations of the Khachaturian ballet's themes, as well as one original melody as a refrain. The latter receives an extensive "violinistic" development — transcribed in fingered octaves, it eventually grows into a grand coda. The piano part is full of broken chords, chromaticism, and Liszt-like arpeggios. In this work, the composer succeeds in combining the virtuosity of both instruments and lyricism of the original work.

Intermission

Arno Babadjanian (1921-1983)

Arno Babadjanian was widely considered a musical phenomenon. An enormous success as a virtuoso pianist, his composition career was regarded to be as brilliant. Among Soviet composers, his style is distinguished by his remarkable development — from romantic expression to angular,

minimalistic forms. Fighting against the mustiness and dogmatism of the Soviet regime, Babadjanian was the first composer to implement jazz elements in his works. Although a pioneer of the New Vienna School's concepts, he stayed a true patriot of his motherland and consistently wove folk music elements in all his works. The *Sonata for Violin and Piano* (1959) is one of the most difficult pieces he composed. Criticized by the Soviet Composers' Union committee, it is demanding in both its execution and comprehension. The work was branded 'formalist' and 'westernized'. Devastated by this storm of criticism, the composer found acceptance and encouragement from Dmitry Shostakovich – this work is dedicated to him - who labeled the work as 'a genius masterpiece'.

Written in non-conventional form, the piece, however, bears the semblance to a cyclical form. The violin solo opens with a tense and dissonant *Grave* theme, while the piano adds a heavy background. Complex in its form, the first movement becomes a kaleidoscope of musical textures and mood changes. Following the dark introduction, the contrasting *Allegro energico* is a more dynamic movement. The recurring Armenian lyrical folk themes emphasize a myriad of impressions. The *Andante sostenuto* starts with a subtle theme in the piano, echoed after four bars of violin pizzicati. Lyrical and purely folk in its essence, this movement is written in ternary form with a stormy and highly virtuosic middle section. The third movement, *Allegro moderato*, is written in a rondo form. Rotating duple and triple meters from the first bars, the movement is full of twisted rhythms and accentuations. The original *Grave* theme reappears at the end of the movement, creating a thematic arch in its conclusion.

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Tzigane is one of the most performed virtuoso pieces in the violin repertoire. It is hard to believe that during the composer's time, the work written for the young virtuoso Jelly d'Arányi was considered 'too vulgar'. Ravel was incredibly impressed with the talent of this prodigy, who happened to be the great-niece of the legendary Joseph Joachim, and dedicated this work to her. The originality of this work can only compete with its technical complexity — the composer essentially used all the known violin challenges known at the time. *Tzigane's* opening, a four-minute cadenza, leaves the violinist tête-à-tête with his or her listeners. Meditative and dramatic at the same time, the interactive monologue leads to a mysterious trill in double stops, and the piano takes over with a cascading passage that would later be given to the harp in the composer's orchestration of the work. The principal melody is then played on open strings, the first iteration of the work's leitmotif. First introduced as a resemblance to the string tuning of the gypsy musicians, it undergoes a series of transformations: from harmonics and left-hand pizzicatos to mas-

sive chords and passages of ornamentation. The coda's frolicsome theme first played in the medium register, eventually announcing itself on the G string. Following a series of accelerandi, the melody resolves itself in a grandiose climax at an extremely fast tempo, creating an impression of a wild gypsy dance.