

ABBHEY CHURCH EVENTS

In the Benedictine tradition of nurturing the arts and learning

2015-2016 Season



Tao Lin

Piano

PROGRAM

Sonata No. 3 in F minor, Op. 5Johannes Brahms
Allegro maestoso (1833-1897)
Andante
Scherzo
Intermezzo
Finale. Allegro moderato ma rubato

INTERMISSION

Ballade No. 1 in G minor, Op. 23Frédéric Chopin
Ballade No. 3 in A-flat, Op. 47 (1810-1849)
Scherzo No. 3 in C-sharp minor, Op. 39

Caprice Espagnol, Op. 37 Moritz Moszkowski
(1854-1925)

Tao Lin appears by arrangement with Lisa Sapinkopf Artists, www.chambermuse.com

With grateful thanks for the support of Olympia Federal Savings since 1997, and for special services provided by the Norcia Community, Saint Martin's University.

12th March 2016
8:00 p.m.

Saint Martin's Abbey
Lacey, Washington

About the Artist

Hailed by critics for his “keen musical intelligence and excellent facility” (Miami Herald) and his “opulent and romantic tone” (Fanfare), Shanghai native and Florida resident **TAO LIN** (www.taolin.net) has been a prize-winner at the Palm Beach International Invitational Competition, the International Piano e-Competition, the William Kapell International Piano Competition and the Osaka International Chamber Music Competition. He has performed at the Kennedy Center, National Gallery, 92nd Street Y, Rockefeller University, Chautauqua Institute, Minnesota Orchestra Hall, Izumi Hall (Osaka, Japan), and Norway’s Edvard Grieg Museum.

Born into a musical family in Shanghai, he began piano lessons at the age of four, first with his mother and later his father, both on faculty at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. The following year saw his first public performance and at the age of eight, he gained entrance to the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. As a teenager, he performed in the Chinese premiere of Bartok’s Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion, a major musical event at the time. After moving to the United States, Mr. Lin continued his active concert activities.

As a soloist, he has performed with Moscow Chamber Orchestra, Winnipeg Symphony, Miami Chamber Orchestra, Knoxville Civic Orchestra amongst others. As a recitalist, he has performed at such prestigious venues as the Kennedy Center, National Gallery of Art, 92nd Street Y, Rockefeller University, Chautauqua Institute, Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, Minnesota Orchestra Hall, Izumi Hall (Osaka, Japan), and Edvard Grieg Museum in Norway.

A regular guest artist at numerous music festivals, Mr. Lin has performed at the Music Festival of the Hamptons, Mainly Mozart Festival (Miami), Music Mountain Chamber Music Festival, Arts Rolla Festival, Highlands-Cashiers Chamber Music Festival, Bowdoin International Music Festival, and Festival Miami.

Mr. Lin has concertized throughout the United States as a founding member of the Berlin Piano Quartet and the Brahms Piano Quartet (with members of the St. Petersburg String Quartet). He has also appeared in concerts with the Miami, Bergonzi and St. Petersburg String Quartets.

With Argentinian violinist Tomás Cotik, Mr. Lin has recorded Schubert's complete music for piano and violin for Centaur Records. These recordings have received numerous rave reviews in the international press, including one in Fanfare Magazine that compared their CD favorably with the classic recording by Rachmaninoff and Kreisler. On

the strength of this success, the duo received a long-term recording contract with Centaur Records to record all 17 Sonatas for Piano and Violin by Mozart. The duo has already completed the final CD of the Schubert project, and meanwhile has released a much-lauded Piazzolla CD on the Naxos label.

Very much in demand as a pedagogue as well, Mr. Lin has given master classes and lectures at universities and conservatories in the United States, Norway, and China. He received the award for “Outstanding International Pedagogue” from Shanghai Normal University School of Music. He is currently an artist faculty member at the Bowdoin International Music Festival and is a visiting professor at Shanghai Normal University Music College.

Critical praise for Mr. Lin includes:

“Tao Lin demonstrated his mastery with inspired and sparkling keyboard work.” —South Florida Sun-Sentinel

“A performance of such subtle sensitivity that few pianists nowadays could fathom, much less muster . . . a creative interpretation carried out with bravura technique and a prismatic sense of keyboard color.” —Coral Gables Gazette

“That the Chinese pianist Tao Lin delivered some of the most virtuoso piano playing heard at Arendal City Hall in a long, long time, if ever, was the verdict of the experts after the concert.” —Agderposten, Norway



Program Notes

BRAHMS:

Brahms' three piano sonatas were written within a relatively short period of time, between the ages of 18 and 20. They are all characterized by robust energy and vast proportions. In these works, many elements of Brahms' later style are already present; the composer, barely out of his teens, speaks in his own unmistakable voice. It was after hearing the first two sonatas, Op. 1 in C Major and Op. 2 in F-sharp minor, together with the Scherzo, Op. 4, that Robert Schumann proclaimed Brahms as the new musical Messiah in his article *Neue Bahnen* (New Paths). The **Third Sonata**, begun before Brahms met the Schumanns, was mostly conceived during that historic encounter in Düsseldorf in October 1853, and written down shortly thereafter.

This sonata is unusual in having five movements instead of three or four. The two movements composed first (movements two and four), sharing the same melodic material, are gentle and lyrical in character while the odd-numbered movements are dramatic and powerful. Dominated almost entirely by the rhythmic figure heard in its first measure, the opening "Allegro maestoso" contains a memorable lyrical episode played by the left hand ("quasi cello," Brahms indicated in the score). It is the first incarnation of a melodic type that will appear in four of the sonata's five movements, always in the key of D-flat major.

The second movement, "Andante espressivo," bears a motto taken from the poet C.O. Sternau:

Der Abend dämmert, das Mondlicht scheint,
Da sind zwei Herzen in Liebe vereint,
Und halten sich selig umfängen.

Night falls and the moon shines,
Two hearts are united in love,
Embracing each other blissfully.

It begins with a singing melody of captivating charm and intimacy, followed by an even more tender middle section where the "D-flat" theme reappears; the same theme, in an expanded form, provides the ecstatic ending of the movement. The demands of expressivity forced Brahms to break one of the cardinal rules of classical composition here: he did not end the movement in the key in which it began.

The great arpeggios at the end of the second movement continue, suddenly accelerated, at the beginning of the "Scherzo." This movement is built upon the contrast between mighty chords and graceful melodic motives, united by an irresistible waltz rhythm. The trio, or middle section, is again in D-flat Major, and is as quiet and introspective as the other passages in that key. Next comes an "Intermezzo" with the subtitle "Rückblick" (Reminiscence). Here the melody of the second movement returns in the minor mode,

with some mournful rhythmic figures and sinister tremolos added in the bass. The second half of the brief movement rises to a fortissimo climax, immediately followed by the pianissimo conclusion.

There is no break before the finale, “Allegro moderato ma rubato.” The rubato refers to a certain degree of rhythmic freedom required for the performance of this movement whose theme is full of unexpected rests and sudden changes of character as an agitated rondo theme alternates with two expressive episodes. The first of these is in F Major, the second, significantly, in D-flat major, treated with the consummate mastery of counterpoint Brahms already possessed at the age of 20. We hear the theme presented in canon and then with a fast-moving accompaniment that consists of the very notes of the theme, played in quick succession. The ending of the rondo is dominated by this melody, though the original rondo theme also appears, and the two are combined in the sonata’s grandiose final measures.

The magnificence of Brahms’s sonata and the innovative ways in which unity among the various movements is achieved remind us of the proximity, in time and in space, of Liszt’s B-minor sonata. The 19th century only saw the differences, which are indisputably great, between “traditionalists” like Brahms and “moderns” like Liszt. Today, more than 150 years later (and more than 50 years after Schoenberg’s influential essay “Brahms the Progressive”) we can appreciate the modernity of the 20-year-old Brahms who, as Schumann said of him, “sprang like Minerva fully armed from the head of Jove.” —Peter Laki

CHOPIN:

Chopin was born near Warsaw, Poland to a French father and a Polish mother. At four, he took his first piano lessons from his nine-year-old sister, surpassing her within a year’s time. Throughout his childhood, he went on trips to big cities outside of Poland to perform. He was out of the country when Polish patriots led a revolt against Russian rule. Chopin desperately wanted to join the cause, but his family and friends warned him against it due to his illness, thought to be tuberculosis, which made him frail and weak. He resolved to go to Paris until the revolt was over, but he never made it back to the land he loved. Chopin spent his life in and out of good health, cherishing friends and family and always composing and performing to the glory of Poland, until the disease took his life at age thirty-nine.

Chopin wanted to write music that reflected his home country. Among his nationalistic compositions are the mazurkas, the polonaises, and the four ballades. The ballades are said to be inspired by the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz, and the poem “L’Ondine” (The Water Spirit) is credited as the prompt for the Ballade No. 3 in A flat. It tells the story of a man who swears faithfulness to his lover, who in turn questions his oath and disguises herself as a water spirit and succeeds in wooing him.

In the winter of 1838, Chopin journeyed to the Spanish island of Mallorca with his lifelong companion, the female author George Sand. It was hoped that through a milder island climate the Chopin's health would improve. Yet Despite the panoramic beauty of Mallorca neither Chopin nor Sand felt well during their stay. They could not get on with the local inhabitants, their lodgings left a lot to be desired and bad weather worsened the composer's condition. It may well have been his deep melancholy that enabled Chopin to write some of his most beautiful and famous compositions during this winter, including the Scherzo No.3.

"Scherzo" is Italian for "joke," but as Chopin biographer James Huneker wrote, Chopin's Scherzos are "of his own creation . . . [he attached] a title that is widely misleading when the content is considered. The Pole practically built up a new musical structure, boldly called it a Scherzo, and . . . poured into its elastic mould most disturbing and incomparable music. "

The Third Scherzo is in modified sonata form. Harmonic forays into distant keys create tension that is resolved with the reprise of the opening material. By delaying the reprise until the end of the piece Chopin increases the dramatic power of its arrival. Furthermore, the reprise is not given in full, but leads to a coda that features new material. This type of composition stood in the face of the Germanic music of the time, which was constructed with the principle of "thematic unity" in mind.

MOSZKOWSKI:

Born into a well-off Jewish family of Polish descent, Moritz Moszkowski entered the conservatory in Dresden at the age of eleven. By the time he was seventeen, he was invited to join the faculty of Berlin's Neue Akademie der Tonkunst, where he would teach for the next quarter century. Before he was twenty, he was touring Europe as one of the most celebrated pianists of his time. In 1875, he and Franz Liszt shared a stage in a two-piano version of Moszkowski's "Piano Concerto in B minor, op. 3," which was subsequently lost.

During the 1880s, Moszkowski's health began to suffer, cutting into his performing schedule but allowing him more time to compose and teach. His first wife left him for a poet in the early 1890s. His second wife left him for his closest friend in 1910. The fortune he had amassed as a performer and composer had been invested in Russian, Polish, and German securities that lost all their value when World War I broke out. In spite of the efforts of friends and former students, he spent the last decade of his life in relative poverty.

The great Polish piano virtuoso Ignace Jan Paderewski (1860-1941) declared that "after Chopin, Moszkowski best understands how to write for the piano." Written in 1885, "Caprice Espagnol, op. 37" brims with Spanish rhythms that made it a concert favorite of such great twentieth century pianists as Josef Hofmann and Wilhelm Backhaus. —Jay Weitz

Saint Martin's Abbey was founded in 1895 by the Benedictine monks of Saint John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota. The Benedictines are a monastic order of the Roman Catholic Church. Today, as in years past, the Benedictine monks of Saint Martin's Abbey pray, work and live together in community, seeking God and responding to Him in their life of prayer. The monk is a man who seeks in the monastery an environment in which he might live the Christian life to the fullest. Under the leadership of their elected abbot, the monks of Saint Martin's Abbey gather together for common prayer several times daily in the Abbey Church, and individually spend time each day in private prayer and spiritual reading.

For centuries, the apostolate of education has characterized many Benedictine communities as their principal work. The monks of Saint Martin's, together with their lay colleagues, are involved in a wide variety of work within Saint Martin's University as administrators, auxiliary personnel, teachers and counselors and in work within the Abbey. They also are engaged in pastoral ministry in Catholic parishes of the Pacific Northwest. The principle of "unity in diversity in Christ" is as characteristic of the Benedictine community of Saint Martin's Abbey today as it was at the time of its founding over a century ago.

In the spirit of the fifteen hundred-year-old Benedictine tradition of nurturing the arts and learning, the monastic community of Saint Martin's Abbey established in 1980 an annual music and lecture series which brings gifted musicians and recognized academics to the Abbey Church. Since its establishment, Abbey Church Events has presented several Pacific Northwest debuts, among which was that of soprano Dawn Upshaw in 1990. Among many other luminaries, Abbey Church Events has presented pianist Richard Goode; The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center; the late pianist/scholar Charles Rosen; soprano Benita Valente; poet Jane Hirshfield; theologians Monica Hellwig, Walter Brueggemann and Peter E. Fink; and Musicians from Marlboro.

Abbey Church Events lectures and concerts are offered free to the public. The series is underwritten by the interest on a small endowment established by Saint Martin's Abbey, as well as by freewill offerings, bequests, and occasional grants. During the 2015-2016 season we are especially grateful for the continued support of Olympia Federal Savings, a gift from an anonymous friend of Abbey Church Events, the Annaliese Soros Educational Residency Program of Young Concert Artists, and The Coca-Cola Foundation, and for special services provided by the Norcia Community, Saint Martin's University.

www.stmartin.edu/abbey/church_events.htm

Abbey Church cover paper cut: Nikki McClure
Printing: Tumwater Printing