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Concert: 2010 Chopin Festival: Chopin the Classicist?

Jennifer Hayghe

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2010 CHOPIN FESTIVAL

Chopin the Classicist?

Hockett Family Recital Hall

October 19, 2010

8:15 p.m.

Faculty Pianist:

Jennifer Hayghe

Student Pianists:

Michael Gaertner

Elizabeth Leger

Forest Tong

Program

Scherzo in B Minor, Op. 20

Frederic Chopin
1810-1849

Michael Gaertner

Scherzo in B-Flat Minor, Op. 31

Elizabeth Leger

Scherzo in C-Sharp Minor, Op. 39

Jennifer Hayghe

Scherzo in E Major, Op. 54

Forest Tong

Intermission

Piano Sonata No. 3 in B Minor, Op. 58

Allegro maestoso

Scherzo: Molto vivace

Largo

Finale: Presto non tanto; Agitato

Jennifer Hayghe

Biographies

Jennifer Hayghe

Jennifer Hayghe has performed in solo recitals and made orchestral appearances throughout the world, including the United States, Europe and Asia. Hayghe received her bachelors, masters degrees, and doctorate degree in piano performance from The Juilliard School, where she was the last student of the legendary artist-teacher Adele Marcus. Hayghe won every award possible for a Juilliard pianist to receive, including the William Petschek Debut Award, resulting in her New York City recital debut at Alice Tully Hall.

Hayghe's orchestral appearances include performances on numerous series with the National Symphony Orchestra, recent concerts with the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra, the Virginia Symphony Orchestra, the Pensacola Symphony Orchestra and performances with various orchestras in the United States and abroad. She has performed in major chamber music series, including the Museum of Modern Art's "Summergarden" series and Bargemusic in New York. She has also performed as a chamber musician in the Mostly Mozart Festival at Lincoln Center and has taught chamber music throughout the United States and Central America. In addition, Hayghe has been frequently featured in radio broadcasts including National Public Radio's Performance Today series, and on live broadcasts on the major classical radio stations of Washington, D.C., Chicago and New York City. Her first solo recording, *Paintings From the Piano*, featuring works by Debussy, Schumann and Mussorgksy, was recently released by Centaur Records.

Currently an Associate Professor of Piano at Ithaca College, Hayghe has served as a featured artist at music teachers conventions in Louisiana, Texas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Virginia. She has performed and taught as a soloist and chamber musician at universities and colleges throughout the country and was previously the Barineau Endowed Professor of Piano and Keyboard Area Coordinator at Louisiana State University. She lives with her husband, Robert McGaha, and son William outside of Ithaca, NY.

Student Performers

Michael Gaertner hails from Wexford, PA and studies with Dr. Jennifer Hayghe. He is a junior pursuing his degree in Piano Performance with a Collaborative Emphasis.

A junior from Orange, CT, Elizabeth Leger is a student of Dr. Jennifer Hayghe. She is a Piano Performance major.

Forest Tong, an alumnus of the Ithaca College Summer Piano Institute, is from Ithaca, NY. He is a junior at Ithaca High School and studies privately with Dr. Jennifer Hayghe.

Notes

Chopin the Classicist?

Despite the seemingly quintessential Romantic nature of Chopin's work, his music owes a great debt to earlier masters and forms. Tonight's program explores the "classical" side of Chopin's output. But how classical are these works really?

Four Scherzi

In *A History of Keyboard Literature*, pianist-scholar Stewart Gordon describes these four works: "The idea of taking the scherzo out of the sonata framework, lengthening it, endowing it with virtuoso traits, and thus molding it into a long character piece belongs distinctly to Chopin." Composed between 1831 and 1842, these four pieces are known for their brilliance and virtuosity – a far cry from the idea of a scherzo as a musical joke, or a short inner sonata movement in scherzo-trio form. The four scherzi do share a common time signature of three-quarter time, vestiges of the traditional pulse of the menuet-trio (which evolved into the scherzo-trio) form. However, Chopin indicates a "Presto" tempo for the four pieces, so that only downbeats seem to be heard throughout. Curiously, the phrase patterns of the scherzi all strictly conform to four or eight-bar phrases, which actually helps stabilize tempo and pulse for the performer.

The first Scherzo in B Minor, Op. 20 (1831-32), is the most literal in its formal structure, closely following a typical scherzo and trio form with written-out repeats. Chopin adds only a dramatic two-chord introduction and coda to the form. The trio section exhibits one of the few times that Chopin uses folk material in his work – the slower section is based on a Polish Christmas Carol "Sleep, Jesus Sleep," ironic in comparison with the raw savage aspects of the rest of the work.

The Scherzo in B-Flat Minor, Op. 31 (1839) is a more extended work, with a section that develops themes from both the mysterious scherzo and slower chorale-like trio. A favorite of audiences and pianists alike, this scherzo is the most often performed. In his review of this work, Robert Schumann said this scherzo "...is a highly attractive piece, so overflowing with tenderness, boldness, love and contempt, that it may be compared, not inappropriately, to a Byron poem." (G.C. Ashton Jonson's Handbook to Chopin's Works, 1905).

The third Scherzo in C-Sharp Minor, Op. 39 (1839) is the most tightly constructed of the scherzos with Lisztian octaves interspersed with beautiful bell-like falling passagework. Rather than containing a slower trio flanked by faster scherzo sections, this piece boasts two slower trio sections of falling arpeggiated passagework, between the driving octaves of the scherzo passages. The introduction is as mysterious as the opening of the second scherzo, and the coda is as magnificent as those of the two preceding works in the genre.

The final Scherzo in E Major, Op. 54 (1842) is the most musically and technically complex of the four, with a kaleidoscopic form and subtle harmonic shifts. The ferocity of the previous works is nowhere in evidence in this scherzo, but this is not necessarily a calm or tranquil work. The slower trio is a sublime example of Chopin's expressive harmonic writing and one is particularly struck by the uniqueness of this work after listening to it in context with the others of the genre.

Sonata in B Minor, Op. 58

Written in 1844-1845, a half a decade after Chopin completed his second sonata, the B Minor Sonata "conforms" much more to a standard form than his previous work, which was criticized for the disparity of the movements. Perhaps this sonata was an attempt to answer some of the criticism his revolutionary sonata drew. While the form is clearer, there is an abundance of material and a contrapuntal complexity that is not readily apparent due to Chopin's innate expressivity in his writing.

The first movement, a wonderfully majestic opening, is cast in typical sonata-allegro form, but with so many lush themes it appears to be bursting at the seams. The second movement scherzo is an elegant work, with crystalline passagework in the outer scherzo sections. The inner trio is a polyphonic chorale that

offers a distinct contrast to the surrounding sections. The slow third movement is definitely an Italian operatic stage piece, with a portentous opening introduction followed by a cantabile melody with “orchestral” accompaniment. The middle section, a sostenuto mood-painting, is full of finger pedaling techniques and questioning motives that add to the dramatic import of the entire movement. The final movement, while longer than the fleeting final movement of the second sonata, is still fairly short in contrast to the rest of the sonata. But what it lacks in length it makes up for in virtuosic ferocity. Comprised of two themes, one that grows in agitation with each repetition, contrasting with one that sparkles with fleet fingerwork, the movement ends with a supremely triumphant coda – especially a triumph for the poor pianist who makes it through all that grueling left-hand work!

There is surprisingly little to actually SAY about this sonata, a monument of the piano repertoire, that Chopin has not already said in the music...but it is a hugely satisfying work for both the performer and the audience.

Notes by Jennifer Hayghe