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Concert: 2010 Chopin Festival: Chopin the Dancer

Diane Birr

Nathan Hess

Deborah Martin

Taylor Aretz

Jean Elder

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2010 CHOPIN FESTIVAL
Chopin the Dancer

Hockett Family Recital Hall

November 9, 2010

8:15 p.m.

Faculty Pianists:

Diane Birr

Nathan Hess

Deborah Martin

Student Pianists:

Taylor Aretz

Jean Elder

Rachel Fannick

Kelly McKee

Program

Mazurka in C-Sharp Minor, Op. 6 No. 2

Frederic Chopin
(1810-1849)

Polonaise in C-Sharp Minor, Op. 26 No. 1

Mazurka in E Major, Op. 6 No. 3

Diane Birr

Waltz in G-Flat Major, Op. 70 No. 1 (posth.)

Polonaise in E-Flat Minor, Op. 26 No. 2

Taylor Aretz

Waltz in A Minor, Op. 34 No. 2

Waltz in E-Flat Major, Op. 18

Rachel Fannick

Waltz in A-Flat Major, Op. 34 No. 1

Jean Elder

Intermission

Mazurka in C Major, Op. 33 No. 3

Mazurka in D Major, Op. 33 No. 2

Deborah Martin

Mazurka in A Minor, Op. 17 No. 4

Mazurka in A-Flat Major, Op. 59 No. 2

Nathan Hess

Waltz in C-Sharp Minor, Op. 64 No. 2

Waltz in D-Flat Major, Op. 64 No. 1, "Minute Waltz"

Kelly McKee

Polonaise in A-Flat Major, Op. 53, "Heroic"

Nathan Hess

Biographies

Diane Birr

Pianist Diane Birr has collaborated with numerous vocalists and instrumentalists in recitals and master classes throughout the United States, and in Russia, Australia, Canada, France, Scotland, Austria, England and Norway. Dr. Birr has served as an official accompanist for the Music Teachers National Association's (MTNA) national competitions, the International Double Reed Society Conference, the International Horn Society Conference and the International Trombone Festival, as well as on the faculty of International Workshops. She is frequently featured as pianist on the Cayuga Chamber Orchestra Chamber Music Series in Ithaca, NY and is a member of the Troica Trio, which in the summer 2010 performed in Sydney, Australia, as well as released its first CD entitled Troica - music for trumpet, saxophone and piano. From 1998-2004 Birr served on the faculty of International Workshops, a two-week music and arts festival held in various locations around the world, where she performed in recitals and master classes, as well as coached chamber music.

Birr holds the Doctor of Musical Arts in Accompanying and Chamber Music from the Eastman School of Music, where she studied with Jean Barr. Dr. Birr maintains an active role in professional music organizations and is currently MTNA Eastern Division Director, as well as a member of the MTNA Board of Directors. Associate Professor Birr teaches at the School of Music at Ithaca College in Ithaca, NY.

Nathan Hess

Dr. Nathan Hess has appeared in concert to critical acclaim throughout the United States and Europe in solo, chamber, and concerto settings. Hess has performed concerti with the Erie Chamber Orchestra, Western New York Chamber Orchestra, and York Symphony Orchestra (PA), among others. Recent guest appearances and masterclasses have included East Carolina University, Oberlin College-Conservatory, Penn State University, and Buffalo State College.

Hess holds the Doctor of Musical Arts and Master of Music degrees from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, and the Bachelor of Music degree, summa cum laude, from James Madison University, where he was named a Presser Scholar. His major teachers have included Elizabeth Pridonoff, Eugene Pridonoff, and Eric Ruple, and he has performed in

masterclasses for such luminaries as John Browning, James Tocco, and Emanuele Arciuli.

In demand as a chamber musician, he has performed with members of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Syracuse Symphony Orchestra, and Buffalo Philharmonic. His chamber music coaches have included Sandra Rivers, Jane Coop, Ronald Copes, Seymour Lipkin, Marian Hahn, Jan Vogler, Charles Neidich, Kenneth Griffiths, Lee Fiser, and eighth blackbird. Hess has also acted as orchestral pianist with the Erie Philharmonic and Binghamton Philharmonic.

Hess performed in and produced a set of recordings for the textbook *Harmony in Context*, published by McGraw-Hill. For five years he chaired the piano program at the Pennsylvania Governor's School for the Arts (PGSA) in Erie, teaching piano, chamber music, theory, and history. His piano students from PGSA have attended institutions such as Manhattan School of Music, Oberlin College Conservatory, Eastman School of Music, Ithaca College, Temple University, University of Cincinnati, and Carnegie Mellon University.

In addition to teaching and performing, Dr. Hess is active in MTNA and also adjudicates frequently throughout the region and East Coast. He has adjudicated the NYSMTA Young Artist Piano, Senior Piano, and Junior Piano Competitions, as well as the Empire Collegiate Competition. Prior to his appointment at Ithaca College, Dr. Hess taught on the piano faculties at Mercyhurst College and SUNY Fredonia. His former undergraduate students have gone on to graduate schools such as NYU, U. of Missouri Kansas City, East Carolina University, University of Cincinnati, and The Peabody Conservatory. He can be heard on the Centaur label in a recording with flutist Susan Royal.

Deborah Martin

Deborah Martin joined the faculty of Ithaca College in 1992 as assistant professor of piano. Prior to coming to Ithaca College, she was on the faculty at Wabash College and DePauw University in Indiana. She was also an assistant instructor of piano at Indiana University and received the Lieber Distinguished Teaching Award. While at Indiana University she coauthored the text *Tonal Harmony at the Keyboard* with Gary Wittlich, professor of music theory.

Martin received a bachelor of music degree, summa cum laude, in piano performance from Baylor University where she studied with Roger Keyes and participated in master classes given by Adele Marcus, John Browning, and Susan Starr. She continued her studies at Indiana University with Karen Shaw, earning both the master of music in piano performance and literature and the doctorate of music in piano literature and pedagogy with high distinction.

Deborah Martin began her playing career in California when she was chosen as a member of the Young Artists Guild and performed with the Bakersfield Symphony Orchestra while still in high school. Piano pedagogy has always been a special interest, and she was active and served on panels at the National Piano Pedagogy Conference from 1984 - 1992. Martin is a member of Music Teachers National Association and New York State Music Teachers Association. She has held several state offices including State President and Vice-President of Conferences and currently represents Eastern Division on the National Board of Directors. Martin is active as seminar and workshop presenter and has adjudicated for numerous organizations across the state and northeast.

In addition to teaching at Ithaca College, Martin maintains a private studio of young piano students. In 1997 she founded the Teaching Intern Program at Ithaca College and through this program mentors Ithaca College students with an interest in teaching piano.

Student Performers

Taylor Aretz is a sophomore from Allentown, PA. She is pursuing her degree in Piano Performance with Professor Phiroze Mehta.

Senior Jean Elder is a Piano Performance major from the studio of Dr. Jennifer Hayghe. Her hometown is Brookline, MA.

Rachel Fannick is originally from Bloomsburg, PA. She is completing her Master of Music degree in Piano Performance this year, studying with Dr. Jennifer Hayghe.

Kelly McKee, a junior majoring in Piano Performance with a Collaborative Emphasis, studies with Dr. Jennifer Hayghe. She is from Bainbridge, NY.

Chopin the Dancer

Tonight's program shifts to the dance, a form with which Chopin is arguably most closely linked. Although dances have a long tradition in keyboard music, it was Chopin who took them to a higher level, exemplified by his sixty mazurkas, seventeen waltzes, and thirteen polonaises.

Waltzes

Waltz in G-flat Major, Op. 70, No. 1 (Posthumous) (1833)

Waltz in A Minor, Op. 34, No. 2 (1831)

Waltz in E-flat Major, Op. 18 (1831)

Waltz in A-flat Major, Op. 34, No. 1 (1835)

Waltz in C-sharp Minor, Op. 64, No. 2 (1847)

Waltz in D-flat Major, Op. 64, No. 1, "Minute Waltz" (1847)

In Chopin's day, his Waltzes were among his most popular compositions, and still they remain among the most frequently performed works in the piano literature. The Waltzes were composed over the period from 1827 (when Chopin was 17 years old) to 1847 (two years before his death). Previously the waltz in piano music was a short, modest piece, often with rustic overtones, as in the German *ländler*, and including a trio. Later the waltz became an elegant dance cultivated in the refined circles of the aristocracy, in which context it could also appear as a bravura piece. This type of waltz provided the basis for Chopin's. Only eight of the seventeen waltzes were available in print during Chopin's lifetime, as he was very particular over which works were deemed worthy of publication. The remaining nine waltzes—short and simple with midsections called trios—are all earlier creations and were published posthumously. The first waltz on tonight's program, the G-flat Major—belonging to the posthumous set—is full of grace notes and trills and possesses a light character typical of these earlier pieces.

Chopin's waltzes do not adhere to a single formal scheme. Generally he has written them in several sections, with the first

section being the main waltz; this recurs near the end, while in between are presented shorter, contrasting sections that are really separate waltzes. Often he begins with a ceremonial, march-like introduction, and closes with a brilliant coda, such as the Waltz in E-flat Major, Op. 18, and the Waltz in A-flat Major, Op. 34, No.1. These two waltzes, with their fanfare-like openings, grand melodies, and fast, glittering passages, are excellent examples of salon-style writing. The A-flat's main melody in sixths is especially noble. The companion piece to the A-flat—the Waltz in A Minor, Op. 34, No. 2—is one of the few in a slow tempo. This expressive and melancholic waltz contains an opening cello-like theme that makes way for the intense yearning of the next theme in the right hand. After moving back and forth from the tonic key to the parallel major, this haunting waltz ends as it began. The last two waltzes on the program, the two from the Op. 64 set, demonstrate Chopin's mastery of the form. A nocturne is suggested in the lyrical opening theme of the C-sharp Minor Waltz. This languorous, aristocratic waltz contains three different melodies, the third of which is presented in the parallel major key (but spelled in the enharmonic key of D-flat Major). Interestingly, it is the second theme that is presented the most (three times), while the first principal theme is only presented twice. Finally, the famous "Minute Waltz," is much shorter than the other waltzes and resembles Chopin's earlier works in this genre. It is in simple three-part form, with the first part containing a theme in scale passages and the second part featuring an elegant, lyrical tune. The word "minute" does not refer to the sixty seconds supposedly required to play the piece, but to the term "minute" meaning small.

Mazurkas

Mazurka in C-sharp Minor, Op. 6, No. 2 (1831)

Mazurka in E Major, Op. 6, No. 3 (1831)

Mazurka in C Major, Op. 33, No. 3 (1838)

Mazurka in D Major, Op. 33, No. 2 (1838)

Mazurka in A Minor, Op. 17, No. 4 (1832)

Mazurka in A-flat Major, Op. 59, No. 2 (1845)

More individual than the waltzes are those dances that relate to Chopin's native Poland—the mazurka and the polonaise. Chopin began composing the first of his sixty mazurkas for piano as early as the mid 1820s. The mazurkas show remarkable creativity and variety and are great examples of Chopin's harmonic innovation. Liszt called these miniature tone poems “imperious, fantastic, and impulsive.”

Chopin employed many different forms in these works, with no particular one predominating. While some of the earlier mazurkas show the simple three-part form (the mazurka proper and its trio), others do not. At any rate, a mazurka is a dance in triple time, with repetitions of sections an important aspect; usually three of four sections that contrast in key, thematic material, and character are repeated in various combinations.

Named for the Mazur people of Mazovia, mazurkas can be classified as one of three types: the *kujawiak*, a slow and serious dance named after the Kujawy region; the *mazur*, a dance in moderate tempo; and the *obertas*, a dance in a fast tempo. A wonderful example of the *kujawiak* is the deeply poignant A Minor Mazurka, Op.17, No. 4. Its slow tempo, nocturne-like embellishments, chromaticism, and its minor mode with raised fourth scale degree are all features of the *kujawiak*. The majority of Chopin's mazurkas are of the *mazur* kind. Now dotted rhythms and wider leaps are common. Often there are irregular accents, especially at the ends of phrases on second or third beats. Notice also the presence of grace notes and other ornaments. The C Major Mazurka is a good example of this type. The A-flat Major Mazurka has one of the more unique melodies in all the mazurkas. Instead of a dotted melody with grace notes, the melody here is much smoother. Often Chopin used more than one dance type in a given mazurka, as in the C-sharp Minor Mazurka. The beginning has the serious of a *kujawiak*, but then Chopin adds a central section in the relative major, lending it a more *mazur* feel. The D Major and E Major Mazurkas are excellent examples of the *obertas* type. Their

features are generally the same as the *mazur*, except now the tempo is much faster. Originally mazurkas were often sung to the accompaniment of a *dudy*, a form of bagpipe, which produced a drone bass. Chopin frequently featured this aspect in his own mazurkas; listen for these drones in each of the mazurkas performed tonight.

Polonaises

While the mazurkas are smaller and more intimate pieces, the polonaises are large-scale, bravura pieces intended for the concert hall. Thirteen total polonaises exist, but just seven constitute the main body of these works. The ones you will hear tonight are from this main body. Listen for the characteristic polonaise rhythm present in each: eighth note, then two sixteenth notes, then one or more eighth notes.

Polonaise in C-sharp Minor, Op. 26, No. 1 (1835)

Polonaise in E-flat Minor, Op. 26, No. 2 (1835)

In the Op 26 Polonaises, we have a ternary scheme, with rounded binary form evident in the main polonaise section and in some of the midsections. The C-sharp Minor's bold and jagged opening keeps returning in a piece that is mainly lyrical in character. The central trio section in D-flat Major, with its sweet and sentimental melody, greatly contrasts with the turbulence of the outer sections. This particular polonaise, like the earliest ones, calls for a *da capo* of the opening section. The E-flat Minor Polonaise is even more tragic than its companion in this set. After a *misterioso* introduction of rhythmic chords that builds to a brilliant climax, the *agitato* main theme sets the stage for the unrest that characterizes the rest of the work. Large, rapid chords and passages of octaves finish up the main polonaise section. The central trio in B Major is march-like in character but is certainly subdued compared to the outer stormy sections.

Polonaise in A-flat major, Op. 53, “Heroic” (1843)

The majestic Polonaise in A-flat Major (“Heroic”) contains a brilliant introduction with chromatic chordal runs, reaching higher and higher, until the main polonaise theme appears in thirds resembling an aristocratic march. The immediate restatement of the theme is even grander, with octave doublings in both hands exploiting the full range of the keyboard. The main central section in E Major is bravura in nature, opening with *fortissimo* arpeggiated chords. Immediately following is an ostinato figure in octaves in the bass and the theme in dotted rhythm above. This progresses from *sotto voce* to a triumphant *fortissimo*. A meandering chromatic transitional passage leads to the culminating statement of the polonaise theme, complete with a climactic coda.

Notes by Nathan Hess