4-5-2005

Concert: Yundi Li, piano, Ithaca College Concerts 2004-5

Yundi Li

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ITHACA COLLEGE
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

ITHACA COLLEGE CONCERTS 2004-5

Yundi Li, piano

Ford Hall
Tuesday, April 5, 2005
8:15 p.m.
PROGRAM

Sonata No. 10 in C Major, K. 330  
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
(1756-1791)

Allegro moderato  
Andante cantabile  
Allegretto

Carnaval, Op. 9  
(Scènes mignonnes sur quatre notes)  
Robert Schumann  
(1810-1856)

Préambule – Pierrot – Arlequin – Valse noble – Eusebius – Florestan  
Pantalon et Colombine – Valse allemande – Intermezzo: Paganini –  
Aveu – Promenade – Pause – Marche des Davidsbündler contre les  
Philistins

INTERMISSION

Andante Spianato and Grande Polonaise, Op. 22  
Frédéric Chopin  
(1810-1849)

Rhapsodie Espagnole, S. 254  
(Folies d’Espagne et jota aragonesa)  
Franz Liszt  
(1811-1886)

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Piano Sonata No. 10 in C major, K. 330

Mozart was probably the finest pianist of his time, and exerted, both by his playing and through his compositions, a tremendous influence on the later technique of the keyboard. He insisted that it was a mistake to play too fast, although his digital dexterity was remarkable, and emphasized always a clean execution and a delicately controlled touch. To play Mozart well is perhaps the greatest test of a pianist, for his music mercilessly exposes any slipshod methods and genially refuses to succumb to the mannerisms of mere "personality."

Over one thousand compositions came from his pen and among them were twenty-seven piano sonatas. The Sonata in C major, K. 330 is one of the best-known and loved and is considered by many musicologists to be one of the finest.

This sonata is one of the "Paris Sonatas," a group of five keyboard sonatas once believed to have been composed in Paris in 1778. However, recent research shows that, except for the "tragic" A minor sonata (K. 310), they were probably written in Munich or Vienna between 1781 and 1783, and published in Vienna in 1784.

This lighthearted sonata is a good example of Mozart's early works. It consists of three movements, fast-slow-fast, in the style of the early classical sonatas (a typical sonata of the later period includes a dance section before the final movement). Throughout the piece a thematic statement is heard, reiterated in a slightly modified, yet fully recognizable form. A contrasting theme is then introduced, followed by the return of the familiar theme. This recurring pattern gives the sonata the classical sense of balance and unity.

The first movement, Allegro moderato, opens with a lively melody buoyed by an Alberti bass accompaniment figure (a figuration in which the chords are outlined by the left hand and named for Domenico Alberti who first employed this device.) The second theme follows and provides contrast on account of its slower tempo. A short development section, unusual in that it does not open with the opening theme of the exposition, follows while presenting sporadic fragments of the theme. The recapitulation section, however, does present the opening theme of the exposition, this time altering its arpeggios and scalar runs.

The second movement, Andante cantabile, is a set of variations on a theme. The lyrical theme is introduced in a choral-like texture. The variations are not always in full length, but parts of the theme appear disguised in textural, melodic and rhythmic variations. The third movement, Allegretto, is built upon a rondo structure. The
opening theme is interspersed between brief contrasting musical episodes. After a last statement of the principal theme the work concludes with three cadential chords.

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Carnaval, Op. 9 (Scènes mignonnes sur quatre notes)

Robert Schumann is a central figure in musical Romanticism; his music is infused with much self-expression, potent lyricism and extra-musical associations - both personal and literary - thus making him one of the quintessential Romantic composers. Though Schumann was above all a composer of piano music and art songs, the concert literature of the nineteenth century would be greatly impoverished without his orchestral works.

Son of a bookseller, publisher and author, Schumann demonstrated such talent in both musical and literary spheres while still a schoolboy that his father thought to send him to study composition with Carl Maria von Weber in 1826. Unfortunately, both Weber and Schumann-père died before this plan could be realized, and in 1828, Robert's mother sent him to the University of Leipzig to matriculate as a law student. After a rather dilatory pursuit of legal studies in both Leipzig and Heidelberg, he finally won his parent's permission to devote himself solely to music in 1830.

Much of this was due to the support of the renowned piano pedagogue Friedrich Wieck, he who later, after much resistance and a court battle, would become Schumann's father-in-law. Wieck told Frau Schumann that three years of solid study could see her son one of the foremost pianists of the day. His share of Robert's tutelage however, dropped to nought when his daughter Clara showed promise as a concert pianist herself and required his presence on concert tours.

Carnaval had its origins in 1834 with the arrival at the Wieck household of a young piano student, Ernestine von Fricken. The 17-year-old girl caught Schumann's fancy to such an extent that they were secretly engaged, and Ernestine's father felt obliged to remove her from Leipzig. A week later Schumann was inspired to write a piece based on A-S-C-H, letters common to his name and her hometown of Asch. Originally titled Fasching: Schwänke auf vier Noten für Pianoforte von Florestan ("Carnival: Anecdotes on Four Notes for Piano after Florestan") and catalogued as his Opus 12, it was renamed Carnaval, with the subtitle meaning "Little Scenes on Four Notes," and published in 1837 as his Opus 9.

Carnaval reveals the variety of tone color and harmonic effect, subtle fancy, droll humor, and symbolic and realistic suggestion characteristic of the piano music of Robert Schumann. Its movements, which give the impression of the mood and portray the scenes and characters of a Lenten masquerade, are often based
on dance rhythms, especially the waltz. The motive formed by the letters A-S-C-H – the musical notes A-flat, C, B in German (As-C-H) – provides not only a unifying melodic structure for the work, but also a key into how Schumann wove the events of the outer world into his inner life as well.

Préambule is the musical introduction supposed to be played by a band at the head of a masquerade procession. Pierrot depicts the clown who led the procession in a mood of farcical gravity, and Arlequin describes a clown in animated mood. Valse noble, supposedly played by the band, is more subdued and graceful than the introduction. Eusebius and Florestan were creations of Schumann's imagination, the former a poetic, introspective dreamer and the latter fiery and passionate. Coquette is a sketch of the eternal feminine. Réplique, Sphinxes is a brief pause. Papillons represents the maskers who are dressed to suggest butterflies. Lettres dansantes is a play on the four notes, A-S-C-H. Chiarina is a delicate tribute to Clara Wieck, as Chiarina was his pet name for her. Chopin is a clever imitation of one of Chopin's nocturnes. Estrella was the name given by Schumann to Ernestine von Fricken. Reconnaissance depicts two of the maskers recognizing each other. Pantalon et Colombine are two of the characters in the procession, traditional figures at a carnival. Valse allemande is another number by the band, a graceful, slow and stately German waltz. Paganini imitates the most distinctive characteristics of the great virtuoso violinist's style. Aveu is a tender, pleading avowal of love. Promenade is another musical fragment for the band, with a reminiscent waltz toward the end. After another brief Pause comes the Marche des Davidsbündler contre les Philistins, the longest number of the work. Into it are woven a quaint old tune known as Grandfather Dance and a favorite college song at German universities. The march symbolizes the triumphant march of the new romantic school, which Schumann championed, under the "Davidsbündler" against the conventional and academic "Philistines."

Andante Spianato and Grand Polonaise, Op. 22

In November 1830 Chopin headed for Vienna. As a young composer from Warsaw, he hoped to capture the audiences abroad and gain international stature. In 1831, the Russians seized Warsaw, crushing the Poles' hope for their long-awaited independence. Chopin's trip abroad became a permanent one; he settled in Paris and never returned to his homeland.

Written during the political turmoil in the composer's native land, the Grand Polonaise reflects Chopin's love for his homeland, and enhanced his position as Poland's national composer. The piece was originally intended for piano and orchestra. The orchestral accompaniment was relatively insignificant - and
although the piece can still be heard in its original scoring - the solo version has successfully been adopted as a virtuoso piece on the concert platform.

The andante spianato, a simple, nocturne-like prelude, was added four years later. Spianato, meaning "smooth" in Italian - refers to the gentle wave-like figure in the left hand. A hymn-like homorhythmic section in triple meter appears in the middle, and briefly at the end.

The beginning of the Grande Polonaise is announced by an energetic fanfare-like phrase (played by the orchestra in the original version). The "solo" is characterized by the liveliness of a festive dance tune, decorated with ornamentation of great difficulty. Various virtuoso figurations fill the musical space; yet, extremely ornate as it may seem, the piece never loses its driving force, and keeps moving forward with the aid of dance-like rhythmic patterns steadily provided by the left hand.

**Rhhapsodie Espagnole, S. 254 (Folies d'Espagne et jota aragonesa)**

In 1863, Liszt found himself living in Rome. He soon took up residence at an almost deserted monastery called Madonna del Rosario. He lived simply there in a room furnished with only a wooden bed, a work table, a bookcase and a small upright piano with a missing D, yet many beautiful compositions date from this period of peaceful seclusion. Among these works is the *Rhapsodie espagnole*, written as a recollection of a tour he made to Spain several years earlier. Stylistically, the work recalls the sound of another work composed about the same time, *Legende: St. Francois d'Assise – Le predication aux oiseaux*. The free variations of the rhapsodie are based on two traditional Spanish songs: *La Folia* and *Jota aragonesa*. *La Folia*, originally a dance, has been set by many composers including Corelli, Vivaldi, C. P. E. Bach, Sor, Nielsen and Rachmaninoff.

After a long cadenza like opening, the work proceeds with *La Folia* in C-sharp minor in the form of a *passacaglia*. From there it slides into D major for the statement of the traditional dance of Aragon, *jota aragonesa*. The free variations are extremely ornamented yet maintain a dignity and stoicism. Near the end, there is a reprise of the *jota* that works itself into the recap of *La Folia* this time in D major for the grand conclusion.
Yundi Li

Born in 1982 in Chongqing, China, Yundi Li first gained worldwide attention after winning first prize at the 2000 Frederick Chopin International Piano Competition in Warsaw. Mr. Li was the first person in 15 years to be awarded a first prize.

In 2001, Mr. Li signed an exclusive recording contract with Deutsche Grammophon (DG). *The New York Times* named Mr. Li’s second recording featuring Liszt “Best of the Year” for 2003 and also praised Mr. Li’s most recent recording of Chopin *Scherzos* and *Impromptus* for Mr. Li’s “white-hot virtuosity” and “uncanny clarity.” DG plans to release a new recording featuring Mr. Li each year until 2009.

Mr. Li made his US debut at Carnegie Hall in June 2003 as part of Steinway’s 150th anniversary gala concert. Highlights of the 2003-04 season included appearances with the Cincinnati Symphony, Moscow Philharmonic, Budapest Festival Orchestra, Israel Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, and Malaysian Philharmonic. In April 2004, he completed his North American Debut Recital Tour including sold out performances in Boston, Vancouver, San Francisco, and New York. In August of 2004, Mr. Li was the only piano soloist to be invited to perform in a gala concert celebrating the 10th anniversary of Ozawa Hall at Tanglewood.

In February of 2005, Mr. Li made his subscription debut with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Wolfgang Sawallisch. In Spring 2005, he will perform in Los Angeles and New York at Carnegie Hall with the American Youth Symphony celebrating its 50th anniversary. A second major US Recital Tour is planned for April 2005, including performances in Seattle, Portland, San Diego, Cincinnati, Columbus, Kansas City, Baltimore, Ithaca, and in New York at Alice Tully Hall. This summer, Mr. Li will appear with Vladimir Ashkenazy and the London Philharmonia, Seiji Ozawa and the Japan Philharmonic, and James Levine and the Verbier Youth Orchestra.

Mr. Li resides in Hannover, Germany, where he studies with Arie Vardi at the Hannover Conservatory of Music.
## CONCERT CALENDAR

### April

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<td><em>Guest Recital; Yundi Li, piano</em> (admission charge)</td>
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<td>Mary Hayes North Competition for Senior Piano Majors</td>
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<td>Jazz Workshop; Steve Brown, musical director</td>
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<td>Piano Ensemble; Phiroze Mehta, coach</td>
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<td>Brass Choir; Keith Kaiser, conductor</td>
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<td>Jazz Workshop; Keaton Akins, graduate music director</td>
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<td>Opera Workshop; Patrick Hansen, stage and musical director</td>
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<td>Wind Ensemble; Stephen Peterson, conductor</td>
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### May

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<td>7:00</td>
<td><em>Guest Recital; Glimmerglass Opera Young American Singers</em></td>
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<td>38th Gala Commencement Eve Concert</td>
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(Ben Light Gymnasium)

Ithaca College Concerts 2004-5 (admission charge)

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