

Invesco Piano Concerts

Generation Next

Thursday, November 10, 2016 at 8:00 pm

This is the 660th concert in Koerner Hall

Alexander Seredenko, piano
Charles Richard-Hamelin, piano
Stéphane Tétreault, cello
Tony Yike Yang, piano
Emily D'Angelo, mezzo-soprano

Philip Chiu, piano
Steven Philcox, piano

PROGRAM

Sergei Prokofiev: Piano Sonata No. 7 in B-flat Major, Op. 83, "War Sonata No. 2: Stalingrad"

- I. Allegro inquieto
- II. Andante caloroso
- III. Precipitato

(Alexander Seredenko)

Robert Schumann: *Fantasiestücke*, Op. 73

- I. Zart und mit Ausdruck
- II. Lebhaft, leicht
- III. Rasch und mit Feuer

(Stéphane Tétreault & Philip Chiu)

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky: *Pezzo capriccioso*, Op. 62

(Stéphane Tétreault & Philip Chiu)

Sergei Prokofiev: Piano Sonata No. 7 in B-flat Major, Op. 83, "War Sonata No. 2: Stalingrad"

- IV. Allegro inquieto
- V. Andante caloroso
- VI. Precipitato

(Tony Yike Yang)

INTERMISSION

Gioachino Rossini: *Giovanna d'Arco*

(Emily D'Angelo & Steven Philcox)

Fryderyk Chopin: Piano Sonata No. 3 in B Minor, Op. 58

- I. Allegro maestoso
- II. Scherzo: Molto vivace
- III. Largo
- IV. Finale: Presto, ma non tanto

(Charles Richard-Hamelin)

Sergei Prokofiev

Born in Sontzovka, Russia, April 11/23, 1891; died in Moscow, Russia, March 5, 1953

Piano Sonata No. 7 in B-flat Major, Op. 83 (1939-42)

The descriptive tempo markings – *inquieto*, *caloroso*, *precipitato* – that Prokofiev provides for this, the most popular of his piano sonatas, speak of a particular time and place. Prokofiev completed the sonata in 1942 in Tbilisi, Georgia, where he and many other artists had been evacuated to escape the Nazi onslaught. It is one of his three so-called ‘War Sonatas,’ Nos. 6, 7, and 8, which represent the composer at the peak of his skill. He worked on all ten movements of the three sonatas concurrently between 1939 and 1944 and they were his first piano sonatas in 16 years. The three movements of No. 7 contain all the hopes and aspirations of a nation struggling for victory. The great Russian pianist Sviatoslav Richter was eager to give the first performance of the sonata, after learning it in just four days. At the time he said: “The sonata immediately throws one into the anxious situation of a world losing its equilibrium. Disorder and uncertainty reign. Man observes the raging of death-dealing forces. Full of the will for victory, he makes a headlong running attack, clearing away all obstacles. He will become strong through the struggle, expanding into a gigantic and life affirming force.”

The ferocious first movement contains some of Prokofiev’s finest, most uncompromising music. Its nervous intensity and bitonality dramatically contrast with the warm lyricism of the slow movement. Here, a disarmingly simple melody seems to be drawn straight out of the opera *War and Peace*, on which Prokofiev was working at the time. It is, in fact, closely related to the song “Wehmuth” (Sadness) by Schumann. The driving, motoric, *moto perpetuo* finale, with its thrilling seven-beats-to-the-bar, propels the sonata to a decisive end. The composer Miaskovsky, who was also evacuated to Tbilisi, described it as ‘superbly wild.’

Robert Schumann

Born in Zwickau, Saxony, June 8, 1810; died in Endenich, nr. Bonn, July 29, 1856

Fantasiestücke, Op. 73 (1849)

In 1849, against an unsettled political background and periodic debilitating personal health, three dozen works flowed from Robert Schumann’s pen with extraordinary fluency, in many different genres. “It has been my most fruitful year,” he wrote to a fellow composer and friend. “It seemed as though the outward storms drove me more into myself. Only in my work did I find any counterforce against the terrible pressures that burst upon me from outside.” Schumann was eager to prove his mastery of any medium, whether there were precedents for a particular combination of instruments or not. He was also eager to reach a broader market with his music. The original title for his Op. 73 was *Soiréestücke*, indicating an interest in domestic music making, or *hausmusik*. He originally published the *Fantasiestücke* for clarinet and piano, though the title page – in a pragmatic move calculated to increase sales – indicates that the solo part could also be played by clarinet, violin, or cello. The three pieces form an organic whole, since they are linked by both key and musical themes and follow one another with increasing momentum, without break. In the first, the violin introduces a dreamy, melancholy theme, while the piano presents another, complementing it. As the song-like second movement opens, this piano theme is heard again, quite transformed into something more joyful, now in the major key. Similarly, the second movement’s smoothly chromatic middle section later returns as a distant echo. Almost immediately, Schumann transforms it into a vigorous flourish that bursts to life at the beginning of the third movement. More references to themes from the opening movement underline the superb craft of these delightful pieces.

Pyotr Il’yich Tchaikovsky

Born in Kamsko-Votkinsk, Russia, April 25/May 7, 1840; died in St. Petersburg, Russia, October 25/November 6, 1893

Pezzo capriccioso, Op. 62 (1887)

Composed in Aachen while at the bedside of his dying friend Nikolai Kondratiev, the short *Pezzo capriccioso* makes a brave attempt to smile through its tears. An anguished opening gives way to a somewhat wistful theme, tinged with an underlying melancholy. Tchaikovsky dedicated the piece to another friend, cellist Anatoly Brandukov, whose companionship provided relief at this demanding time and also an incentive to begin its composition. Brandukov’s virtuoso technique is reflected in a central delicately dashing spiccato section which sparkles in the major key over the prevailing musical pulse. After revisiting the reflective theme, Tchaikovsky ends his final completed concert work for solo instrument and orchestra – appropriately enough given its title – in a capricious mood.

Gioachino Rossini

Born in Pesaro, Italy, February 29, 1792; died in Passy, Italy, November 13, 1868

***Giovanna d'Arco* (1832)**

"Give me a laundry list and I will set it to music," Rossini is reputed as saying. During his highly productive years – with 39 operas in 19 years – it was said that Rossini would rather write another page of an opera than get out of bed to pick up a fallen leaf. Then, before he was 40, his fortune made, he gave up composing operas and furthered his reputation as a bon viveur. He cooked fabulous meals, devised new recipes for Parisian chefs he knew, and entertained his friends with his legendary wit. During the remaining 39 years of his life, not one opera came from his pen. Towards the end, however, Rossini channelled his energy into providing music for frequent Saturday evening musicales which attracted leading musicians and fashionable society to his Parisian home. He called these witty, often whimsical piano pieces, songs, and short works for small ensemble, *Péchés de vieillesse* (Sins of Old Age). Happily, Rossini sinned frequently between 1856 and 1868 and the number of short pieces grew to more than 150, each of which he copied, corrected, signed, and collected into 13 volumes.

The operatic cantata, or *gran scena*, *Giovanna d'Arco* (Joan of Arc), found in Volume 11, was written for Olympe Pélissier, whom Rossini would marry in 1848 after his first wife's death. It opens with a deeply-felt, intense, and reflective opening monologue in which Joan anticipates the coming battle in which, she believes, God has chosen her to lead the French against the English. This leads to a cantabile aria in which the French heroine's thoughts now turn to her mother and to the pride which she and all French mothers will soon feel in her daughter. As she pictures her mother's tears in the central tempo di mezzo, Joan's grief combines with resolve for the upcoming battle. Premonitions of death combine with visions of victory in explosive coloratura. A brilliant cabaletta, "Corre la gioia," displays an entire arsenal of vocal techniques from the bel canto era, concluding one of the most challenging vocal pieces from Rossini's pen.

Fryderyk Chopin

Born in Żelazowa Wola, nr. Warsaw, Poland, March 1, 1810; died in Paris, France, October 17, 1849

Piano Sonata No. 3 in B Minor, Op. 58 (1844)

In 1844, Chopin was 34 and at the peak of his genius. He wrote his third and final piano sonata during a last, happy summer spent with the novelist George Sand, at Nohant in France. Here, free from the need to support himself and teach, he was able to concentrate on composition. The B Minor Sonata, arguably his most successful large-scale work, begins with a proud, heroic flourish. A second theme introduces a nocturnal mood. Both themes are amongst Chopin's finest, capable of the gentlest expression and the most exhilarating virtuoso development. At the same time, Chopin writes more contrapuntally here than in any other piece. His veneration for the music of Bach, which he played daily, underlines every bar, the learning masked in the romantic surge of the music. After the grand scale of the opening movement, the Scherzo comes in complete contrast, a fine example of the sort of shimmering right-hand piano playing with which Chopin used to dazzle his audiences. The slow movement is a glorious Italian aria, where the voice floats effortlessly over the accompaniment and the mood is positive and radiant in feeling. After the calm repose, the finale is an exultant rondo which increases in intensity with each return of the theme. The excitement builds to a final stretto – an operatic device that Chopin adapts to great effect, in which the tempo quickens to a dazzling conclusion.

- Program notes © 2016 Keith Horner

[Alexander Seredenko](#)

[Charles Richard-Hamelin](#)

[Stéphane Tétreault](#)

[Tony Yike Yang](#)

[Emily D'Angelo](#)

For seven years Mr. Yang was a student of The Phil and Eli Taylor Performance Academy for Young Artists at The Royal Conservatory, where he primarily studied with James Anagnoson. Alexander Seredenko is a holder of the Performance Diploma and the Artist Diploma from The Royal Conservatory's Glenn Gould School, and is an alumnus of the Rebanks Fellowship Program. Charles Richard-Hamelin made his Conservatory debut on January 15, 2016, in a joint recital with Tony Yike Yang. Stéphane Tétreault made his Conservatory debut on April 24, 2015, and Emily D'Angelo is making her debut tonight.