

Invesco Piano Concerts

Stewart Goodyear

Sunday, December 4, 2016 at 3:00 pm

This is the 673rd concert in Koerner Hall

PROGRAM

Johann Sebastian Bach: Partita No. 5 in G Major, BWV 829

- I. Praeambulum
- II. Allemande
- III. Corrente
- IV. Sarabande
- V. Tempo di Minuetto
- VI. Passepied
- VII. Gigue

Ludwig van Beethoven: Piano Sonata No. 32 in C Minor, Op. 111

- I. Maestoso: Allegro con brio ed appassionato
- II. Arietta: Adagio molto semplice e cantabile

INTERMISSION

Stewart Goodyear: "Acabris! Acabras! Acabram!" (world premiere)

Fryderyk Chopin: Fantaisie-Impromptu in C-sharp Minor, Op. 66

Fryderyk Chopin: Ballade No. 4 in F Minor, Op. 52

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky: Selections from *The Nutcracker*, Op. 71 (arr. Stewart Goodyear)

Stewart Goodyear's "Acabris! Acabras! Acabram!" is commissioned by The Royal Conservatory of Music/Koerner Hall in honour of Canada's sesquicentennial and is generously supported by Philip & Eli Taylor.

Johann Sebastian Bach

Born in Eisenach, Germany, March 21, 1685; died in Leipzig, Germany, July 28, 1750

Partita No. 5 in G Major, BWV 829 (pub. 1730)

Bach's ability to improvise at the keyboard for hours on end was legendary and the improvisatory character of his creativity comes down to us in his preludes, toccatas, and fantasias. Then there is another side. Bach's fugal writing was what his second son, C.P.E. Bach referred to as music that was "composed without instrument, but later tried out on one." The two sides co-existed throughout Bach's career, being at their clearest in the 48 Preludes and Fugues of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* and found elsewhere, as in the opening movements of the Partitas. The First Partita was Bach's first publication, made at his own expense in 1726. Cautiously testing the market for sales, other Partitas followed year-by-year, each publication timed to coincide with the trade fairs that made Leipzig a centre of the publishing industry. In 1731, he collected the partitas into a single

publication, numbered 'Opus 1,' describing the music as 'composed for music-lovers to delight their spirits.' He was already using the title *Clavierübung* (Keyboard Practice) to describe this publication. The term Partita was used as an equivalent for the Suite by German composers of the time. The opening movements, each in a different style, generally set the tone of the subsequent dance movements. Here, a brilliant, showy Praeambulum, full of crisp, toccata-like gestures, offers an inviting gateway into a sequence of dance movements, for the most part in an Italian style. The concluding Gigue is a virtuoso double fugue which is probably the most complex and challenging movement in the collection.

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born in Bonn, Germany, December 15 or 16, 1770; died in Vienna, Austria, March 26, 1827

Piano Sonata No. 32 in C Minor, Op. 111 (1821-2)

By the time that the public was coming to terms with the revolutionary aspect of Beethoven, the composer had begun to look inward. In his late music, private thoughts and personal agony find their way into public discussion. The profound and the trivial rub shoulders. Expansiveness and compression of thought coexist. Extremes of despair and sublimity find expression within the same piece, notably in his final piano sonata, Opus 111. The music charts a characteristic Beethoven journey from darkness to light. It eschews the triumph and flag waving of a similar C minor to C major progression found in the Fifth Symphony. Beethoven casts his final sonata in just two movements that both contrast with and complement one another.

The C minor mood of the opening movement is vintage Beethoven, with its brusque dramatic gestures, terse octave statements, downward plunging sequences, and extremes of register. Technically, it grapples with the huge challenge of combining a sonata-form first movement with the fugue, in music that is fundamentally tragic in tone. The second movement enters another sound world, altogether calmer, more reflective and serene. Its sudden entry into C major is startling and the hymn-like theme with which it opens is one of the most sublime of a series that Beethoven used as the basis of his slow movements. Structurally, the condensed theme leads to a seamless sequence of three variations, a double variation (where the two halves of the theme continue to become even more varied, rather than literally repeated) and an extended coda. The movement is a meditation on this theme, evolving as its rhythmic note values shrink and the texture becomes increasingly dense. Trills add to the intricacy of the music as it becomes ever more transfigured and ethereal, concluding with a simple pianissimo chord.

Stewart Goodyear

Born in Toronto, Ontario, 1978

"Acabris! Acabras! Acabram!" (world premiere)

This work is a poem for piano inspired by the French Canadian folktale, "The Flying Canoe," which tells a story of lumberjacks working in the center of a very large forest. The piece starts with the grueling repeated rhythms of the lumberjacks cutting mammoth trees, watching them crash into the thick snow, hauling the trees from one place to another, longing to see the women they had left behind.

On New Year's Day, the snow is so thick that the lumberjacks can not do any work. As they wished to see their loved ones that day, Baptiste, one of the lumberjacks, decided to make a pact with the devil: if the devil would make the canoe fly wherever Baptiste wished, the lumberjack would not say Mass for a year. However, if Baptiste did not return the canoe before dawn of the next day, the devil would own the lumberjack's soul. Before dawn, Baptiste and his companions would not be allowed to say the name of God or fly over a church, otherwise the canoe would crash.

Only a few of the lumberjacks agreed with Baptiste's plan, and with Baptiste saying the magic words, "Acabris! Acabras! Acabram!," the canoe flew into the air with the lumberjacks paddling through the sky.

When the lumberjacks arrived home, the women were filled with joy to see them, and there was celebration and merriment. When it was close to dawn, the lumberjacks remembered that they had to return the canoe, but they found Baptiste inebriated, lying under a table. Fearing that he would say the name of God in his drunken state, the men bound and gagged him into the canoe, paddling away. Baptiste woke up from his drunken stupor, loosened the ropes and gag, and shouted: "Mon Dieu, why did you tie me up?" At the name of God, the canoe nose-dived, plunged towards the ground, and hit the top of a large tree. The men tumbled out of the canoe and fell down into the darkness. The lumberjacks were never heard from again.

- Stewart Goodyear

Fryderyk Chopin

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

Fantaisie-Improptu in C-sharp Minor, Op. 66 (c. 1834)

Ballade No. 4 in F Minor, Op. 52 (1842-3)

There is an element of spontaneity, improvisation, and immediacy about Chopin's four Improptus, something that the great Chopin interpreter, Alfred Cortot, likened to being 'born under the fingers of the performer.' Chopin's earliest attempt at a genre

already championed by Schubert was the work we now know as the C-sharp Minor Fantasy-Impromptu. But he did not publish this piece in his lifetime and it is believed that the title *fantaisie* was added by a publisher. Now among Chopin's most played music, the Fantasy-Impromptu encloses a broad, lyrical, gently sentimental melody within surging waves of notes, the right hand in duple time, the left in triple. The central melody is derived from the outline of the opening swirl of agitated right-hand sixteenths.

The origins of the Ballade lay in narrative poetry and folk song where the reader would find a descriptive, often dramatic story. By the early 19th century, the term had come to be used for the narrative songs of German composers. Then, in 1831, Chopin began to use the title Ballade for his single-movement, extended piano compositions, each with its own implied storyline. All four Chopin Ballades draw on the idea of contrasting and reconciling opposites – which also forms the basis of the sonata principle. The F Minor Ballade is a masterpiece, combining an apparent effortless and inevitable forward momentum with the most sophisticated architectural structure. Its main theme undergoes much variation and transformation before a powerful and shattering climax and a dramatic, bravura coda bring the work to a virtuoso conclusion.

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky

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

Selections from *The Nutcracker*, Op. 71 (1891-2/2014) (arr. Stewart Goodyear)

"The ballet is infinitely worse than *The Sleeping Beauty*," Tchaikovsky wrote to his nephew, with all the uncertainty of a composer working on a new work. Still, his 1892 ballet *The Nutcracker* proved moderately successful at its Mariinsky Theater premiere and tremendously successful once a few changes to cast and production had been made. Its scenario concerns a magical dream that comes to the young Clara after she receives a nutcracker by way of a Christmas gift. *The Nutcracker* is the only ballet from which Tchaikovsky made an orchestral suite and it is the only ballet (so far, at least) which tonight's soloist has transcribed for his chosen instrument: the entire ballet, not just the suite. "I grew up with the entire ballet," Goodyear says, "just listening to it over and over and over again. I was enchanted by the music and just loved the storyline, not only the dance, but the battle between the Nutcracker and the Mouse King – so intense! There were so many layers. I thought 'I have to do the whole thing' ... I am trying to create as faithful an arrangement as possible, with all the orchestral elements there – the woodwinds and the brass, so it does not feel as though the audience is missing anything – it is all there."

- *Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, and Tchaikovsky program notes* © 2016 Keith Horner

Stewart Goodyear

Mr. Goodyear studied at The Royal Conservatory under James Anagnoson and Leon Fleisher. He made his Koerner Hall debut on November 28, 2010, and this afternoon marked his fourth appearance in the Hall.