

HAMILTON COLLEGE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC
PRESENTS

Faculty Recital
Elena Nezhdanova, piano
with
Roman Placzek, cello

Sunday, March 2, 3:00 pm
Wellin Hall

Schambach Center for Music and the Performing Arts

Program

Partita No. 5 (1975)

Prelude

Valse

La Chorale

L'Aria

Myroslav Skoryk (1938 - 2020)

Images, book 2 (1907)

Cloches à travers les feuilles (Bells through the leaves)

Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut (And the moon descends on the temple that was)

Poissons d'or (Goldfish)

Claude Debussy (1862 - 1918)

Sonata for Cello and Piano (1915)

Prologue

Sérénade

Finale

Debussy

Intermission

24 Preludes for Solo Piano, Op. 41(1998)

C major - Moderato

A minor - Presto

G major - Moderato

E minor - Appassionato – Nostalgico

D major - Andantino sognante

B minor - Chorale

A major -Andante

F# minor - Presto

E major - Allegretto

C # minor - Largo

B major - Misterioso

G # minor - Allegro bruto

F # major - Andante

E flat minor - Allegretto

D flat major - Moderato

B flat minor - Allegro ma non troppo, tragico

A flat major - Adagio tragico

F minor - Grave

E flat major - Adagio religioso

C minor - Misterioso

B flat major - Allegro moderato

G minor - Andante

F major - Allegretto

D minor - Grandioso

Lera Auerbach (b. 1973)

Late arrivals will be seated at appropriate intervals. Food and beverages are not allowed in Wellin Hall. Please turn off phones and other devices. Schambach Center is a smoke-free building.

Notes

Myroslav Skoryk (13 July 1938 – 1 June 2020) was a Ukrainian composer and teacher. His music is contemporary in style and contains stylistic traits from Ukrainian folk music traditions. Skoryk was exposed to music in the household from an early age, even though his parents were not professional musicians. His great aunt was the famous Ukrainian soprano Solomiya Krushelnyska. Skoryk entered the Lviv Music School in 1945, but two years later his family were deported to Siberia, where he grew up. The family did not return to Lviv until 1955. In 1960, Skoryk enrolled in the postgraduate research program at the Moscow Conservatory, where he studied with the composer Dmitry Kabalevsky. In 1964, Skoryk, at the age of 25, began his first teaching position, becoming Ukraine's youngest composition lecturer at the Lviv Conservatory, where he remained until 1966. He then accepted a professorship position at the Kiev Conservatory.

Partita No. 5 for Piano

In the mid-seventies, Skoryk began exploring a “new method” of composing not seen previously in his works, which he labeled “Stylistic Games.” Skoryk begins to step away from folk influences; however, this does not mean that he abandons folkloric writing altogether, but that these elements become more or less subsidiary. As the first of such works, the Partita No. 5 (1975) is not only Skoryk's longest composition for piano, but it also bears a different character from his earlier works.

Polystylism, as the new technique came to be officially known, appeared with the rise of postmodernism at the end of the twentieth century. According to Skoryk, the new movement was not only “very fashionable” but also, it “declared the possibilities of unification of the un-unified, a paradoxical cohabitation of musical styles contained in a work covering diverse extremes of musical material borrowed from different centuries and styles.”

A feature of music which has evolved is the concept of tonality. With regard to his own music, Skoryk claims that he is influenced by “a classic style which germinates from Prokofiev, Bartók, Szymanowski, and Shostakovich.” He also mentions Ravel, Debussy and Prokofiev as the major influences on his creativity, stating that “in the music of these composers, we see traditional ‘old tonal music’ with brilliant findings in modal structures and new harmonic revelations.” (Dr. Viktor Markiw)

Claude Debussy (22 August 1862 – 25 March 1918) was a French composer. He is sometimes seen as the first Impressionist composer, although he vigorously rejected the term or any “label” altogether. Born to a family of modest means and little cultural involvement, Debussy showed enough musical talent to be admitted at the age of ten to France's leading music college, the Conservatoire de Paris. He originally studied the piano, but found his vocation in innovative composition, despite the disapproval of the Conservatoire's conservative professors. He took many years to develop his mature style, and was nearly 40 when he achieved international fame in 1902.

Images (book 2)

“I love pictures almost as much as music” were the words of Debussy to composer Edgar Varèse. The French composer sought to paint pictures with tones, to create visions as yet unrecorded in music, and to the extent that his music evolved in a manner consonant with such a painter as Monet, it was inevitable that he become associated with the painterly movement called Impressionism.

Cloches à travers les feuilles (Bells Through the Leaves)

Debussy first heard Javanese musicians at the Paris Universal Exposition and the sounds of the gamelan they played stayed with him, surfacing in the allusions to the instrument in the present piece. Writing about Java in 1913, he said, “There was once, and there still is, despite the evils of civilization, a race of delightful people who learnt music as easily as we learn to breathe. Their academy is the eternal rhythm of the sea, the wind in the leaves, thousands of tiny sounds which they listen to attentively without ever consulting arbitrary treatises.” The bells of the title are initiated in the first two measures by way of a whole tone scale, from which the entire piece is constructed. The simplicity of this opening belies a predominant complexity of intertwining parts that requires the music be written on three staves. A middle episode of pianistic brilliance contrasts strongly with the exotic, otherworldly sonorities of the first and last sections.

Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut (And the Moon Sets over the Temple That Was)

Debussy dedicated this piece to his good friend and biographer Louis Laloy, an authority on oriental and ancient Greek music. The poetic wording of the title, the fragmentary melodic structure, the pungent dissonances, and the almost floating nature of the sonorities all confirm what Debussy referred to as the search by the poets and painters of the Symbolist movement for “the inexpressible, which is the ideal of all art.”

Poissons d'or (Goldfish)

This piece, along with Reflections on the Water, is probably the most frequently performed of the Images sets. And no wonder, since it is both brilliant and evocative. Obviously, goldfish are inextricably associated with water, but here, unlike Reflections, the imagery is concrete. It is said that a painting of two gold-colored fish on a small Japanese lacquer panel that Debussy owned was the inspiration for this work. In order to suggest the darting movements of these tiny water creatures, a pianist must be at once the master of grace and elegance as well as of freedom of expression. Debussy's images, whatever the subject, have a fantasy that is as closely related to mental images as to the physical reality of pianistic bravura. (Notes by Orrin Howard)

Sonata for Cello and Piano

Initially subtitled “Pierrot is angry at the moon” the Sonata for Cello and Piano does have in it some of the modern-day commedia dell'arte sensibility - a raw, heart-on-the-sleeve, dark humor. The Cello Sonata is the most unrefined, emotionally exposed of the three sonatas - maybe even of all Debussy's works. The opening movement lays out a singing theme in the cello, by turns churning up ecstatic outbursts and quiescent moans. The middle movement is almost jazz-like in its counterpoint among three voices - piano in a dual role of melodic partner with the cello and as plucky, bluesy accompaniment, bowed cello in its upper register sharing the melody with piano, and the cello's lowest notes, played pizzicato in an elastic syncopation that takes on the role of an upright jazz bass. There is indeed a lunar quality about this movement: Time stops and starts, melodic and harmonic themes shift between sultry darkness and starlit dances. From the final quiet statement of the serenade spills an exultant duet between cello and piano. The cello's opening ascending sequence introduces a dancing theme which is folded into the mix for the rondo-like re-examination of the work's previous themes. (Notes by Meg Ryan, LA Phil)

Lera Auerbach (b. October 21, 1973) Hailed a renaissance artist for modern times, Lera Auerbach was born to a Jewish family in Chelyabinsk (near Ural mountains), former Soviet Union, is Austrian-American pianist, composer, conductor, poet, visual artist, and a licensed

Practitioner in Applied Neuroscience. She is also an award-winning poet and an exhibited visual artist. All of her work is interconnected as part of a cohesive and comprehensive artistic worldview. Lera Auerbach has become one of today's most sought-after and exciting creative voices. Her performances and music are featured in the world's leading stages – from Vienna's Musikverein and London's Royal Albert Hall to New York's Carnegie Hall and Washington D.C.'s Kennedy Center. She was one of the last artists for defect former Soviet Union in 1991 while on permitted tour to the United States. Lera Auerbach holds multiple degrees from the Juilliard School in New York and the Hannover University of Music, Drama, and Media in Germany.

24 Preludes for Solo Piano, Op. 41

The work was commissioned by Tom and Vivian Waldeck in collaboration with the Caramoor International Music Festival. These 24 Preludes follow the structure of circle of fifths pairings modeled after Chopin's Preludes Op. 28 and Scriabin's Preludes Op. 11. These preludes are short tone-poems that feature polystylistic writing, distinct harmonic contrasts, color, and texture. The motivic and textural connections within the Preludes give this work a sense of unity. From composer's words: "In writing this work I wished to create a continuum that would allow these short pieces to be united as one single composition." "What we forget first of all are the small things, the details of everyday life behind which memories are concealed. It's a special type of vision 'from within' that sees an object not only for what it is, but also with the secret vision of memory that allows one to see it as you glimpsed and perceived it in childhood."

Biographies

Dr. Elena Nezhdanova, piano, has performed in United States, China, and Europe, as an orchestral soloist, recitalist, and chamber musician. She made a debut with an orchestra at the age of eight in her native hometown in Russia. In October 2015, Elena had an opportunity to perform Peter Tchaikovsky's 1st piano concerto with Sichuan Philharmonic Orchestra in Chengdu, China. As a solo performer, Elena was a guest artist at the Civic Morning Musicals concert series in Syracuse, NY; Music House Recital Series in Greenville, SC; performed at the Interlochen Center for the Arts Summer Camp; La Frontera International Piano Conference in Brownsville, TX; Music by Women Festival at the Mississippi University for Women, and was invited to perform four times at the Lives of the Piano concert series at Manhattan School of Music in NYC.

An avid chamber musician, Elena is a co-founding member of the Nezhdanova Placzek Duo (piano/cello). Their professional engagements include Texas and the East Coast in the USA, London U.K., Dresden and Chemnitz's performances in Germany, and four prominent Czech cities, including Prague where they performed along-side renown former violist of the Talich Quartet, Vladimir Bukac. In September 2021, the Duo received "Gold" and "Best Chamber Ensemble" award at the 3rd World Piano Teachers Association – Singapore International Piano Competition (Chamber Music category).

As an educator, Dr. Nezhdanova was commissioned to write a published review of Irina Gorin's "Tales of a Musical Journey" books (The Piano Magazine, 2017). She was a guest workshop clinician for the Brownsville Piano Studio Music School (a four-day Professional Teachers Development week) in Brownsville TX, for North Carolina Music Teachers Association, and the CNYAMT. Taught masterclasses for The Piano League, Opus Ithaca School of Music, and East Tennessee State University. Internationally, she co-presented for European Piano Teachers Association (EPTA) in Guimarães, Portugal (Summer 2022); presented for professional piano teachers in Olomouc, Czech Republic and gave masterclasses at the North London Collegiate School in the U.K. In 2021, Dr. Nezhdanova was appointed a Lecturer in Piano position at Hamilton College. Additionally, she teaches a vibrant piano studio at home in Manlius, NY where many of her students throughout the years have participated, received notable recognition, and won at various local, national and international young artist competitions and festivals. Dr. Nezhdanova holds BM from Syracuse University, MM from Ithaca College, and DMA from UNC-Greensboro.

Dr. Roman Placzek, cello, is the cellist of Nezhdanova-Placzek Duo and a published composer, Czech-born Dr. Roman Placzek, is an internationally recognized soloist, chamber musician, orchestral player, and a sought-after cello teacher and music educator. As a member of the Duo, Roman is actively performing (pre-pandemic) on the east coast of the United States and in Europe. Covid-19 pandemic permitting, the ensemble is planning its first visit to Australia and other new, exciting performing and educational activities in Europe, including Italy and the Czech Republic.

Dr. Placzek has performed for and with many distinguished artists such as cellists Yo-Yo Ma and Carlos Prieto, violinists Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, Ruggiero Ricci, Charles Treger, and James Buswell, pianist Konstantin Lifschitz, famous British actor Corin Redgrave, legendary singer Roberta Flack, and numerous ensembles and orchestras across Europe and the East Coast of the United States. At age 17, as a member of the Student String Quartet at the Janacek Conservatory, Roman was invited to participate at the Yehudi Menuhin Youth Orchestra in France, where they performed several well-received high-profile recitals with the ensemble. Since the early stages of his performing career, Mr. Placzek got many opportunities to perform concertos (Dvorak, Boccherini, J.C. Bach) with various orchestras. His performances are highly praised for their ingenuity, stylistic authenticity, and the beauty of his sound.

In 1994, Roman established Golden Mountain String Trio. The ensemble was invited to the USA, where they earned several significant awards. Roman's string trio "Ballad and Epilogue" written for the ensemble and dedicated to the memory of his friend's fallen father, a WWII hero, was his first published composition. It was originally published by BRIXTON PUBLICATIONS, with whom he also published "Dumka" for Cello and Piano, Piano Trio No. 1 "Dream," and his first string quartet "Dance of the Witches." Those and many other compositions, including the original cello method, will be republished under Dr. Placzek's label BumbleBee Notes™. Dr. Placzek is also the founder and the former Artistic and Executive Director and the President of the Board of Directors of several music institutions and festivals: The NC Bach Festival (2016-2019), the Golden Mountain Chamber Ensemble Music Academy in Amherst, MA, and the Golden Mountain Summer International Chamber Music Festival in Zlaté Hory, Czech Republic (2000-2006), to name a few.

Roman received his musical education from Janáček State Conservatory in Ostrava of the Czech Republic, Mozarteum Salzburg in Austria, The Boston Conservatory, and the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. In May 2014, Roman was conferred upon the Doctor of Musical Arts in Cello Performance with a cognate in Music History and Literature degree from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. His dissertation theses Importance and Pedagogical Value of Three Sonatas for Two Cellos, Op. 43 by Bernhard Romberg, is available for academic purposes at ProQuest, or in a book form for purchase at www.amazon.com. For full information, lessons, booking, and commissions, please, visit www.romancello.com.

