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Piano Concerts 2015-2016



Soheil Nasseri

SCHUBERT CHOPIN BEETHOVEN BEETHOVEN/LISZT

Saturday, September 19, 2015, 7:30 p.m. Visual and Performing Arts Center, De Anza College



Vassilis Varvaresos

CHOPIN SCRIABIN

Saturday, October 17, 2015, 7:30 p.m. Visual and Performing Arts Center, De Anza College



Vadim Rudenko

BACH MOZART BRAHMS RACHMANINOFF TCHAIKOVSKY/PLETNEV

Saturday, November 14, 2015, 7:30 p.m. Visual and Performing Arts Center, De Anza College



Sandra Wright Shen

BACH/BUSONI BEETHOVEN GRANADOS ZHANG DEBUSSY

Sunday, January 10, 2016, 2:00 p.m. Le Petit Trianon, San Jose



ZOFO Duet

GERSHWIN RILEY SAMUEL BARBER HENKIN BACH/KURTAG FRANK

Sunday, February 14, 2016, 2:00 p.m. Le Petit Trianon, San Jose



Anna Federova

SCARLATTI BEETHOVEN RAVEL CHOPIN

Sunday, March 13, 2016, 2:00 p.m. Visual and Performing Arts Center, De Anza College



Nelson Goerner

HANDEL SCHUMANN CHOPIN

Saturday, April 16, 2016, 7:30 p.m. Visual and Performing Arts Center, De Anza College



Yeol Eum Son

SCHUMANN ALKAN KAPUSTIN PROKOVIEV

Saturday, May 7, 2016, 7:30 p.m. Visual and Performing Arts Center, De Anza College

Letter from the President



Dear Friends and Patrons,

Welcome to our breathtaking 2015 - 2016 concert season. We thank you for supporting Steinway Society's internationally acclaimed pianists as they perform beloved masterworks for our community. This season begins with the

vibrant pianist Soheil Nasseri, who has presented 20 recitals in New York City without repeating a piece. October brings Greek pianist Vassilis Varvaresos, who has performed at The White House. Multiple prize-winning, Russian virtuoso, Vadim Rudenko, traverses Baroque to Romantic repertoire in November. Our January, 2016 concert showcases Sandra Wright Shen, First Prize winner at France's International Piano Competition.

Steinway Society also produces educational programs in Bay Area schools, allowing world-class pianists to educate children about the joys of classical music. This past season, we expanded the program. We invite you to volunteer. Simply visit our website to learn more.

Please let your friends know about Steinway Society concerts and consider inviting them to experience for themselves some of the greatest music ever composed, performed by thrilling artists.

Steinway Society's Mission is to nurture a love and appreciation for classical piano music. Please visit our Facebook page to learn more about our artists and programs, and our web site to subscribe. Friend us on Facebook.

Thank you again for your support. We look forward to having you with us for these great performances.

Sandra Wales
President, Board of Directors

Soheil Nasseri

Soheil Nasseri is consistently acclaimed by international audiences and critics alike. A Californian, he began studying piano at age five. He moved to New York City to study with Karl Ulrich Schnabel and in 2001, became a protégé of Jerome Lowenthal, who remains his mentor.

The New Yorker notes that he is "one of New York's most prolific recitalists." Since 2001 he has presented 20 solo recitals there without repeating a piece. Mr. Nassieri has performed in the Kennedy Center



(Washington) and prestigious concert halls in Berlin, London, Tokyo, St. Petersburg, Montreal, Dublin, Bucharest and Tehran. In 2010, he joined American Ballet Theatre for nine performances at New York's Metropolitan Opera House, playing an integral role on stage, both as pianist and actor.

Dedicated to introducing and nurturing a love of classical music to younger generations, Mr. Nasseri has given recitals in more than 60 public schools. He is also committed to new music, and nine composers have written pieces specifically for him. He records for Naxos, Centaur and Mahoor labels.





Sonata in G Major, D. 894 Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Ballade No. 1 in G Minor, Op. 23 Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

Intermission

Variations in C Major on "God Save the King", WoO 78

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

Program Notes

Sonata in G Major, D. 894
Franz Schubert

Completed in 1826, the *Sonata in G Major* is the last sonata for solo piano published before Schubert's death in 1828. It is often called *Fantasie* because the publisher, not the composer, gave that title to the first movement. Indeed, the first movement *Molto moderato e cantabile* evokes a music box that is slowly singing in the background. There are occasional disruptions throughout, including the only *fff* Schubert ever wrote for piano, but the calm and dreamy qualities dominate. The third movement, *Menuetto*, is the most divergent of the four movements, with an opening in B Minor, but a more appealing B Major returns for a little while in the movement's Trio. The Allegretto restores the light-hearted tone of the piece, ending with light chords reminiscent of the first movement.

Ballade No. 1 in G Minor, Op. 23 Frédéric Chopin

A very popular piece that has been featured in movies such as *The Pianist* and on television, Frédéric Chopin's *Ballade No. 1* is a reflection of his loneliness in 1831, when he was in Vienna away from his home in Poland during a time of war. The piece starts off with a Neapolitan chord that resounds before dissolving into a dissonance left unresolved for a time. This gives way to a simple and beautiful subject that continues to darken over the course of a fast dance and an agitated section. Just after a sharp descending passage sounds to indicate little hope, two chords resolve the piece, with nothing left to desire.

Variations in C Major on "God Save the King", WoO 78 Ludwig van Beethoven

Ludwig van Beethoven was so drawn to the patriotic feeling of England's national anthem, "God Save the King", that he composed seven variations on it in 1804. In keeping with that feeling, he also composed a version for chorus accompanied by piano, violin, and violoncello. In 1813, Beethoven references his variations in his *Wellington's Victory Op. 91*, which he dedicated to the then Prince Regent, later king, George IV.

Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67 Ludwig van Beethoven/Franz Liszt

This symphony will grab your attention from the beginning with its very famous, widely copied, short, four-note motif. Probably only after the tension relaxes will one notice that this famous motif and the fanfare announcing the second subject are played on a solo piano instead of by a group of violinists or a horn. Composer Franz Liszt made sure to note the orchestral instruments the pianist is to imitate when the publisher Breitkopf & Härtel paid him to create piano transcriptions of Beethoven's symphonies in 1838. Liszt became very familiar with the style and nuances in Beethoven's compositions and tried to capture even the most insignificant details because of their musical value. He included pedal and fingering markings for beginner piano players, but capturing the grandeur and power of this symphony requires a pianist both highly skilled and insightful.

Vassilis Varvaresos

reek pianist Vassilis Varvaresos
made his sensational New York debut
at Lincoln Center in 2007, performing
Lowell Liebermann's Piano Concerto No.
2 with the Juilliard Orchestra. His 2012
Carnegie Hall recital debut garnered both
audience and critical acclaim. Immediately
thereafter, he was invited to play at the
White House for President and Mrs.
Ohama.



A graduate of The Julliard School, where he studied with Jerome Lowenthal, Mr.

Varvaresos received the prestigious Diplôme d'Artiste-Interprète degree at the Conservatoire National et Supérieur de Musique et de Danse in Paris and has won awards at notable international piano competitions, including the First Prize in the Young Concert Artists International Auditions at the age of 14 and 3rd Prize at the 2014 George Enescu International Competition in Bucharest. He has performed throughout Europe and the U.S, toured China with the Athens State Symphony, and composed several film scores. His two CDs feature works of Chopin, Debussy and Liszt, and Brahms' Piano Concerto No. 1.



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Etudes, Op. 10 Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

Intermission

Fantaisie, Op. 28
Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915)

Two Poèmes, Op. 32 Nos. 1 and 2
Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915)

Sonata No. 4 in F-sharp Major, Op. 30 Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915)

Program Notes

Etudes, Op. 10 Frederic Chopin

Frederic Chopin wrote his first set of twelve etudes Op. 10 from 1829 to 1832, while he was in his late teens and early twenties. With these etudes, he introduced a completely new playing style fraught with technical challenges and emotional depth. As opposed to just refining certain techniques, Chopin's etudes require a mature level of virtuosity and musicality to execute. Additionally, every etude is marked legato, emphasizing the necessity for learning to connect notes seamlessly. Chopin titled each etude by opus and number; however, some of these pieces have acquired nicknames over time to summarize their predominant emotion, such as Op. 10 No. 3 "Tristesse," nicknamed for its intense sadness.

Fantaisie, Op. 28 Alexander Scriabin

Alexander Scriabin wrote *Fantasie* in sonata form in 1900 between composing his third and fourth sonatas. As a result, the style of this piece very much echoes that of his third sonata, and the harmony and tone of the third theme later reappears in his *Symphony No. 3*. The dynamics from one theme to the next vary from dark sulkiness to melodic relaxation, while a constant intensity maintains tension and builds anticipation, often in the form of heavy chromatic chords. In order to avoid repeating an earlier theme from the exposition, Scriabin rescored the recapitulation section and inflated it to something more complex. The result is a passion that persists throughout the long coda and into a confident ending.

Two Poèmes, Op. 32 No. 1 and 2 *Alexander Scriabin*

In 1903, Scriabin had a very prolific year, composing his *Sonata No. 4, Two Poèmes*, a couple of etudes, and *Valse Op. 38*. This period marked the time when Scriabin began including more dissonance in his works. He even considered writing an opera featuring a nameless hero and the second *Poem* as an aria. Perhaps its operatic quality is the reason Scriabin himself played *Two Poèmes* frequently. The first *Poem*, in F-sharp major, a key that Scriabin often used, is fluid and fantastical, evoking a dream-like state in its listeners. The second *Poem* creates a sudden and dramatic shift in tone and tempo, but the energy is shortlived and the piece meets a quiet end almost as quickly as it began.

Sonata No. 4 in F-sharp Major, Op. 30 Alexander Scriabin

A sonata with only two movements, a single theme, and a typical performance time of less than eight minutes, Alexander Scriabin's *Sonata No. 4* is certainly his shortest sonata, but this fact is not equivalent to its being the least expressive. Having the same theme penetrate two contrasting movements creates a sense of change and evolution – the dreamy and calm *Andante* movement precedes a sudden change to celebration and elation in the *Prestissimo volando* movement. In Romantic fashion, Scriabin chooses to round out the piece in cyclic form with the *Andante's* main theme for the finale. This experimentation with the sonata form was just the beginning, since four years later Scriabin wrote his next sonata with just a single movement.

Vadim Rudenko

Vadim Rudenko started playing the piano at the age of four and made his first concert appearance at age seven. He graduated from the renowned Moscow Conservatory. Early in his career, Mr. Rudenko achieved worldwide recognition through prizes won at international competitions, such as Laureate at the International Competition "Concertino Prague" and at the XII Queen Elisabeth Competition (Belgium), and Grand Prix at the International Viotti Competition (Italy).



Mr. Rudenko won 3rd Prize at Moscow's Tchaikovsky International Piano Competition in 1994 and 2nd Prize in 1998.

He has performed widely, as a recitalist and with major foreign orchestras, in Russia, Europe, the USA, Canada, South America, Japan and Korea. His Festival appearances include the Mozarteum (Austria), Newport (USA), Klavier-Festival Rurh (Germany) and White Nights (St. Petersburg). His discography on Meldoc and Pavana Records labels is substantial.





Partita No. 2 in C Minor, BWV 826 Johann S. Bach (1685-1750)

Piano Sonata No. 9 in D Major, K. 311 Wolfgang A. Mozart (1756-1791)

Paganini Variations Op. 35, Book I and II Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Intermission

Six Moments Musicaux, Op. 16, No. 1-4 Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

The Nutcracker

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Mikhail Pletnev (1957-)

Program Notes

Partita No. 2 in C Minor, BWV 826 Johann S. Bach

The *Partita No. 2* is one of six suites in the last set of suites composed by Johann Sebastian Bach in the second half of the 1720s, and in keeping with the patterns seen in many contemporary composers' works, it is the most technically demanding. Although this suite was originally written for harpsichord, there have been many transcriptions for instruments including the piano and even the guitar. Because Bach's two earlier suites, the *English* and the *French*, maintained a formal structure, e.g., each suite opens with a strict Prelude, the *Partita No. 2* has more freedom in structure, e.g., opening styles include an ornamental Overture and a Toccata. Partita No. 2 begins with a Sinfonia that closely resembles a French overture but changes over the course of the Allemande, Courante and Sarabande, moving towards a more active and stately Rondeau and Capriccio.

Piano Sonata No. 9 in D Major, K. 311 Wolfgang A. Mozart

Wolfgang Mozart's ninth sonata opens *Allegro con spirito*, in full motion, with rapid and melodic hand movements that give the pianist no time to rest, until the second subject enters a bit more quietly. The tempo slows in the expressive second movement, as airy trills and syncopation accompany the themes. The true difficulty of the piece, however, lies in the third movement, *Rondeau*, with elements from the first two movements culminating here. The opening melody is just as spirited as in the first movement, with the interesting rhythms of the second movement layered on top. By combining the elements, Mozart shows the themes evolving and maturing.

Paganini Variations Op. 35, Book I and II *Johannes Brahms*

Brahms composed these variations in 1863 as studies for his friend, the virtuoso pianist, Carl Tausig. As a result, the variations exhibit a degree of showmanship and emotional depth that differs from that of many of his other compositions. The two books both open with Paganini's *Caprice No. 24*, which many may know from variations written by other composers, such as Rachmaninoff and Liszt. Each book contains fourteen variations that range from fast and powerful to slow and sensitive.

Six Moments Musicaux, Op. 16, No. 1-4 Sergei Rachmaninoff

An early work, composed in 1896, Rachmaninoff's *Six Moments Musicaux* is a collection of pieces reflecting musical forms from a previous era: nocturne, song without words, barcarolle, virtuoso étude, and theme and variations. Themes range from a funeral march (No. 3), to a majestic canon (No. 6). Rachmaninoff incorporated technical difficulties that reflected his own virtuoso technique.

The Nutcracker Suite

$Pyotr\ Ilyich\ Tchaikovsky/\ transcription\ M.\ Pletnev$

Mikhail Pletnev, the founder of the Russian National Orchestra and a famous concert pianist, wrote virtuosic transcriptions of several passages from Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker Suite*, including the *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy*, the Russian Trepak, and the Pas de Deux. Pletnev has also released recordings of himself playing these transcriptions, which also include Tchaikovsky's The Sleeping Beauty. Much of the original tonal texture is preserved, especially the innovative use of the celesta to characterize the Sugar Plum Fairy's sweetness.

Sandra Wright Shen

Sandra Wright Shen has been hailed as a classical "pianist of the first order." With her passion, musicality, and inspiration, she aims to move hearts through music. Ms. Shen has thrilled audiences at prestigious concert halls such as Washington's Kennedy Center, the Chicago Cultural Center, Monte Carlo Opera House, Frankfurt Cultural Center, Forbidden City Concert Hall (Beijing), and Taiwan's National Concert Hall. In 2012, she won First Prize at the



International Piano Competition of France, and earlier at the Hilton Head International Piano Competition, the Mieczyslaw Munz Piano Competition, and the Taiwan National Piano Competition.

Ms. Shen was graduated from the Peabody Conservatory, where she studied under Ann Schein. She is a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Furman University and a piano faculty member at the Brevard Music Festival and Masterworks Festival. Her discography includes Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor, Op. 30.



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Chaconne in D Minor, BWV 1004

Johann S. Bach (1685-1750) Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924)

Sonata No. 32 in C Minor, Op. 111 Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Los Requiebros from Goyescas Quejas, ó La Maja y El Ruiseñor from Goyescas El Pelele from Goyescas Enrique Granados (1867-1916)

Intermission

"Pi Huang", Moments of Peking Opera Zhao Zhang (1960-)

From Préludes, Books I and II

Les Collines d'Anacapri (Book I)

Bruyères (Book II)

La Fille aux Cheveux de Lin (Book I)

La Cathédrale Engloutie (Book I)

Minstrels (Book I)

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Chaconne in D Minor, BWV 1004

Johann S. Bach/Ferruccio Busoni

Ferruccio Busoni, an Italian pianist and composer, spent thirty years transcribing works by Bach for piano and published them as the Bach-Busoni Editions. The *Chaconne* is the fifth and final movement of Bach's *Violin Partita No. 2* and has been treated by many composers in transcription not only for piano (Busoni, Raff, Brahms), but also for cello (Paetsch), organ (Cook, Messerer), guitar (Segovia) and full orchestra (Stokowski).

Sonata No. 32 in C Minor, Op. 111

Ludwig van Beethoven

Beethoven's *Sonata No. 32 in C Minor*, composed between 1821 and 1822, is the last of his piano sonatas. Instead of the usual three or four movements, there are only two: *Maestoso* and *Arietta*, which could not differ more, save for the fugal structure. The Sonata starts off stormy and impassioned with minor chords that echo a funeral march, suspicious movements, and chaos. The second theme is quiet. Then, the *Arietta*, a set of 8 variations in C major, triumphs with a relaxed melody and a longer duration, "a triumph of order over chaos." Independent of the contrasts between the two movements, this piece embodies pianistic difficulties in terms of physical reach, speed, and figures, which only make it more interesting to see it performed.

Los Requiebros from Goyescas Quejas, ó La Maja y El Ruiseñor from Goyescas El Pelele from Goyescas

Enrique Granados

Spanish composer Enrique Granados wrote *Goyescas* in 1911, when inspired by the imaginative elements in the paintings of Romantic artist, Francisco Goya. The voicing of the piece resembles the source material, with its freedom of style, embellishments and intricate detail. As a result, these compositions are ornamental and highly technical and became the basis for an opera version that was very well received in 1916 at its Metropolitan Opera premier. Since then, the piano suite has been included in the standard piano repertoire.

"Pi Huang", Moments of Peking Opera *Zhao Zhang*

Composer Zhao Zhang (b. 1960) started playing the piano at age 7 and began composing at age 16. While "Pi Huang" is one of his most popular performance pieces, he also wrote the music for the 2008 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony in Beijing. The Peking Opera is a part of traditional Chinese theatre that includes elaborate make-up and costumes, vocal arias, acrobatics and percussion. Famous performers are known for their elegant movements as well as for their singing and recitation. The moments that the composer is trying to capture here range from the brilliant costume colors to the dancing, and the distinct, resonating sounds of the lute and the jinghu, a two-stringed, bowed, high-pitched instrument.

Préludes

Les Collines d'Anacapri (Book I) Bruyères (Book II) La Fille aux Cheveux de Lin (Book I) La Cathédrale Engloutie (Book I) Minstrels (Book I) Claude Debussy

Claude Debussy, like many composers before him, wrote a collection of twenty-four preludes in a matter of months, between1910 and 1913; however, he was less adamant about adhering to the expectation of creating one prelude for each key signature. The titles show Debussy drawing upon different sources of inspiration, from poetry to scenery, and illustrate how invested he was in musical impressionism. The selection of works performed here covers a range of his stylistic trademarks – for example, the parallel harmony in La Cathédrale Engloutie, and the simplicity of an innocent girl in La Fille aux Cheveux de Lin. Because each Prelude can stand on its own, artists take liberties in the number performed and in their order of performance.

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- ◆ Arranged Young Artist In-Home concerts

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