



SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Presents

Veniamin Blokh, piano

Saturday, December 11, 2021

7:00 PM

PepsiCo Recital Hall

Program

Humoreske, op. 20

Robert Schumann
(1810-1856)

I. Einfach

II. Hastig

III. Einfach und zart

IV. Innig

V. Sehr lebhaft

VI. Mit einigem Pomp

VII. Zum Beschluss

Intermission

Piano Sonata in G minor, op. 22

Nikolay Medtner
(1879-1951)

Adiós Nonino

Astor Piazzolla
(1921-1992)

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for an Artist Diploma in Piano Performance. Veniamin Blokh is a student of Professor John Owings.
The use of recording equipment or taking photographs is prohibited.
Please silence all electronic devices including watches, pagers, and phones.

PROGRAM NOTES

The **Humoreske** in B flat major, Op 20, is not, as its title might suggest, a short and capricious character piece like the examples by Dvořák, Grieg, Reger and others, but a piano cycle on a scale to match that of the Davidsbündlertänze. Schumann's choice of the word 'humoreske' (he was to use it again for the second of his four Fantasiestücke, Op 88, for piano trio) is explained in a letter to Clara of 11 March 1839:

"Not to have written to you for a week, is that right? But I have been rhapsodizing about you, and have thought of you with a love such as I have never experienced before. The whole week I have been sitting at the piano, composing and writing, laughing and crying all at once. All this you will find nicely portrayed in my Op 20, the grand Humoreske, which is also about to be engraved. You see, that's how quickly things go with me: conceived, written out and printed. And that's how I like it. Twelve sheets completely written out in a week"

The conflicting emotions Schumann felt while composing his Humoreske are reflected in the music's contrasting moods, or 'humours'. In a letter of 15 March 1839 to his Belgian follower Simonin de Sire, Schumann provided a hint as to the meaning of the work's title when he pointed out that the word 'humoreske' couldn't adequately be translated into French. 'It is a pity', said Schumann, 'that there are no good and apt words in the French language for such deeply ingrained characteristics and concepts as Gemütlichkeit, and for humour, which is the happy fusion of the gemütlich and the witty. But it is this that binds the whole character of the two nations together.' The previous year, in drawing de Sire's attention to his F sharp minor sonata, Op 11, and the Fantasiestücke, Op 12, Schumann told him: 'The human heart sometimes seems strange, and pain and joy are intermingled in wild variegation.'

The Medtner's **Sonata op. 22**, this one-movement work, completed in 1910, has so far achieved the most currency, and deservedly so, for not only does its powerful drama strongly appeal to the emotions but its coherence as a perfect organic whole on a large scale is also profoundly satisfying to the intellect. As Heinrich Neuhaus wrote: 'The sonata's trajectory is felt from the first to the last note as one uninterrupted line.' All the thematic material is integrated and never ceases to grow organically right up to the massive coda, which is a true culmination in both synthesizing and intensifying what has gone before, with two pages of characteristically Medtnerian contrasting rhythms in the right and left hands. The sonata's daring tonal scheme—a rising sequence of alternately minor and major thirds—is further evidence of Medtner's originality in his use of traditional musical language and design.

In 1959, Piazzolla was on a tour of Spanish speaking America when, during a presentation in Puerto Rico with Juan Carlos Copes and Maria Nieves Rego, he received news of the death of his father, Vicente Piazzolla, nicknamed Nonino, due to a bicycle accident in his hometown of Mar del Plata. This news, coupled with the tour's failure, economic problems and homesickness, led Piazzolla to depression. There after receiving such devastating news he composed **Adiós Nonino** in about 30 minutes as a tribute to his father, based on "Nonino", another tango Astor had composed five years earlier in Paris, also dedicated to Vicente Piazzolla.

"Dad asked us to leave him alone for a few hours. We went into the kitchen. First there was absolute silence. After a while, we heard dad playing the bandoneon. It was a very sad, terribly sad melody. He was composing "Adiós Nonino"." — Daniel Piazzolla, Astor's son; 1986.

Because of its melancholic melody and the fact that Piazzolla wrote it so far from his native country while suffering from severe depression, Adiós Nonino evokes a strong sense of nostalgia and has become a symbol of the Argentine diaspora.