



SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Presents

Anna Damerau, piano
Nora Mello, second piano

Wednesday, April 24, 2024

7:00 PM

Van Cliburn Concert Hall at TCU

Program

Prelude in E Minor, BWV 855a (arr. in B minor)

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)
arr. Alexander Siloti
(1863-1945)

Prélude, Fugue et Variation, Op. 18

César Franck
(1822-1890)
arr. Harold Bauer
(1873-1951)

“The Lark” from *Farewell to St. Petersburg*, No. 10

Mikhail Glinka
(1804-1857)
arr. Mily Balakirev
(1837-1910)

Chaconne from *Partita No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1004*

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

Intermission

Piano Concerto No. 23 in A Major, K. 488

I. Allegro

II. Adagio

III. Allegro assai

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

Nora Mello, piano

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Music in Piano Performance. Ms. Damerau is a student of Dr. Tamás Ungár.

The use of recording equipment or taking photographs is prohibited.

Please silence all electronic devices including watches, pagers, and phones.

Program Notes

Prelude in E Minor, BWV 855a (arr. in B Minor)

Described by Dr. Charles Barber as Siloti's "most tender and perfect" piano transcription, this prelude presents a transcendent, mystical atmosphere. Siloti's inspiration was Bach's Prelude No. 5 in E Minor from the *Clavier-Buchlein für Wilhelm Friedemann Bach* (Keyboard Booklet for Wilhelm Fliedermann Bach), which Bach later revised and incorporated into his *Prelude and Fugue No. 10, BWV 855* from Book One of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. While Siloti maintained the essence of Bach's original prelude, he made changes to the form and voicing and transposed the prelude from E minor to the melancholy key of B minor. The prelude is repeated twice in Siloti's transcription. The first time, emphasis is placed on the continuous sixteenth-note figuration colored by an expressive harmonic progression, while the repeat highlights an underlying countermelody.

Prélude, Fugue et Variation, Op. 18

Belgian-born composer César Franck served as an organist at several churches, including the ornate, neo-Gothic St. Clotilde Basilica in Paris. This basilica had one of the best organs designed by Aristide Cavaillé-Coll. After the service, people would listen to Franck's famous organ improvisations. Between 1859 and 1862, Franck wrote down six of these improvisations, including his *Prelude, Fugue et Variation, Op. 18*, dedicated to organist Camille Saint-Saëns. In 1910, pianist Harold Bauer transcribed this work for piano with some differences, and his transcription has gained popularity among pianists in recent years.

Set in the somber key of B minor, the prelude opens with a pensive theme consisting of a ground bass line and descending and ascending lines, as though it were a yearning prayer. Following the prelude is an improvisatory-like transitional prelude leading to a fugue which reaches a climactic point before transitioning to the variation section. In this final section, the opening prelude theme returns with a flowing, sixteenth-note accompaniment and closes in the glorious key of B major, which gently penetrates through the darker harmonic texture in B minor.

"The Lark" from *Farewell to St. Petersburg*, No. 10

Mikhail Glinka composed seventy-nine art songs for voice and piano between 1824 and 1856, including his song cycle *Farewell to St. Petersburg* composed in 1840. These twelve songs are set to the poetry of Glinka's friend Nestor Kukolnik, a well-known poet of his time. The tenth song "The Lark" (*Zhavoronok*) has a simple, memorable melody and folk-like elements, depicting a lark song which gets carried by the wind. I have provided my translation below.

Between heaven and earth, a song resounds,
In an neverending stream, louder and louder it flows.
Hidden is the singer of the fields, where he sings so soundly
Over his beloved friend, the sonorous lark.
Over his beloved friend, the sonorous lark.

The wind carries the little song, but to whom, it does not know,
She to whom it is addressed will understand, and from whom, will learn.
Flow, little song of mine, a song of sweet yearning,
Someone will remember me and will softly sigh.
Someone will remember me and will softly sigh.

Balakirev's piano transcription of "The Lark" retains the tenderness of the original song; however, he thickens and varies the texture, transforming the song into a virtuosic piano piece in the manner of Liszt. For instance, at one point in the piece, scalar runs weave in and out of the melodic line, imitating the swift flight of the lark and the wind carrying the song. The music gains intensity with a series of fast chordal passages and flowing arpeggios before a soft, graceful conclusion as the lark's song gradually floats away.

Chaconne from *Partita No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1004*

Upon his return to his home after a three-month employment position in another city, Bach was devastated when he heard of his wife Maria Barbara's sudden passing. Some scholars believe that this overwhelming grief prompted Bach to write his famous chaconne, the colossal last movement of his Partita No. 2 in D Minor for violin.

This final movement follows the form of a chaconne - a courtly dance in triple meter with variations on a theme. However, Bach's chaconne is more of an expressive musical soliloquy in the tragic key of D minor. Bach displays the violin's full range and includes advanced virtuosic passages, making this piece a beloved and equally challenging work for violinists. Several composers made arrangements of Bach's chaconne, including Mendelssohn, Schumann, Siloti, and Busoni. Busoni's piano transcription written in 1893 keeps many of the elements found in Bach's original work, yet showcases the full potential of the piano with its pianistic techniques, varying textures, and a fuller, orchestral sound.

The chaconne has four main sections, each beginning with a slower, dignified tempo which, after a series of variations, gradually lead into a climactic outburst of energy. Contrary to the other sections which are in D minor, the third section is in the parallel key of D major. In this section, one can hear the sound of trumpets and bells, which may signify God's glory and triumph over death. The fourth section returns to D minor, and in Bach's chaconne for the violin, the final note contains the single pitch D with no indication of major or minor. In my interpretation, the final chord is in the major key as an expression of hope for a bright eternal life.

Piano Concerto No. 23 in A Major, K. 488

During the Classical era (ca. 1750 – 1820), piano concertos gained wide popularity, representing the musical standards of the period. Mozart composed twenty-seven piano concertos, several of which are considered some of the best piano concertos ever written. The renowned Piano Concerto No. 23 was composed in 1786, around the same time as the premiere of his opera *Marriage of Figaro*. Mozart dedicated this concerto to one of his patrons, the prince Joseph Wenzeslaus von Fürstenberg. One source indicates that in one of his letters to the prince, Mozart noted that these concertos were intended "for my own use and for a small group of music-loving friends." Perhaps contrary to Mozart's intent, yet to our delight, Piano Concerto No. 23 has become one of the most widely performed and beloved piano concertos around the world.

Mozart's concerto presents a cheerful first movement with elegant scalar runs and a brilliant cadenza. The beautiful second movement is in F-sharp minor which is the only composition Mozart wrote in this key. The texture in this movement is sparser, allowing for the melodic line to project like in an operatic aria. Mozart's final movement is a lively rondo with scalar passages and quick successions of harmonies before an exciting, celebratory coda.