



SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Presents

Joshua Stanczak, piano

February 1, 2025

7:00 P.M.

Van Cliburn Concert Hall at TCU

Program

Sonata No. 14 in A minor, Op. 143

Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)

- I.* Allegro giusto
- II.* Andante
- III.* Allegro vivace

Rhapsodies, Op. 79

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

- No. 1 in B minor
- No. 2 in G minor

Intermission

Sonatine

Maurice Ravel
(1875-1937)

- I.* Modéré
- II.* Mouvement de menuet
- III.* Animé

Rhapsody in Blue

George Gershwin
(1898-1937)

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Degree in Piano Performance. Joshua Stanczak 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:

Schubert – Although he composed this sonata in February of 1823, Schubert's fourteenth piano sonata was not published until 1839, eleven years after his death. The publishers of this work also added a dedication of the piece to the composer, Felix Mendelssohn. This sonata has been seen by many as a profound and tragic work that became one of Schubert's most well-known piano sonatas.

The first movement of this sonata begins with a very raw and bare melody that sings in the melancholy key of A minor. This introductory theme continues to develop in its dark state but then leads into a beautiful contrasting and hymn-like theme in the key of E major. This contrast occurs several times throughout this movement and is one of the key tools Schubert uses to create such powerful and effective emotions throughout the piece.

The second movement contrasts starkly with the bleak and bittersweet mood of the first movement. Pianist Stephen Hough said concerning this contrast, "The normality of its theme makes it strangely unsettling..." The movement features secondary voices that continue to crowd around the main melodic line, and there are also unique interjections written as pianississimo.

The third movement features some of Schubert's most ferocious writing for the piano. This fast and energetic movement provides the perfect climax to the storm that had been brewing in the first two movements.

Brahms – These rhapsodies were written as a set in 1879 during Brahms's summer stay in Pörschach, Austria. This was also during the peak of Brahms's career as a prolific composer. Brahms dedicated the rhapsodies to his friend, Elizabeth von Herzogenberg, a musician and composer herself. It was she who suggested that Brahms change the name of these sophisticated compositions from "Klavierstücke" to "rhapsodies."

The first rhapsody (No. 1 in B minor – *Agitato*) is the longer of the two pieces and is written in sonata form. The piece is also designed with intense outer sections that surround a lyrical, nocturne-like melody in B major. The coda section at the end includes this same theme in the bass line and is also written in B major.

The second rhapsody (No. 2 in G minor – *Molto passionato, ma non troppo allegro*) is more compact than the first rhapsody and in a more conventional sonata form, with a large development section in the middle leading back to the main "A section."

Ravel – the *Sonatine* by Maurice Ravel was composed in fragments and at different times before it was finally compiled together as one piece. Ravel decided that he would write the first movement of this work for a composition competition in Paris in the spring of 1903. The competition regulations stipulated, among other things, that the manuscript be written in F-sharp minor and that it should not exceed seventy-five measures in length. However, Ravel decided to make the piece eighty-four measures long, which caused him to be disqualified from the competition. The second and third movements of this work were written sometime between 1904 and 1905 and finally published in the fall of 1905.

The Sonatine was written in a very different way than previous sonatas or sonatinas from the previous century. This work was meant to be short, to the point, and, in many ways, non-traditional. The piece was also written in extreme detail and precision, meaning that performers were not to stray away from the way the notes were written. Any use of rubato or any sense of rushing through the piece was strictly prohibited according to the composer's original intent and interpretation.

Gershwin – In 1923, orchestra leader Paul Whiteman asked the 24-year-old George Gershwin to compose “something” for his epoch-making concert of symphonic jazz at the Aeolian Hall on Lincoln's Birthday in 1924. At first, Gershwin did not want the job and had almost forgotten about it entirely were it not for the shock of learning from an item in the New York Herald-Tribune early in 1924 that “Gershwin was busy on a symphony for the much-heralded Whiteman concert.”

And thus began the process for Gershwin to compose perhaps the greatest American composition in the past century. Gershwin decided to aim what he was to compose at a misconception regarding the inflexibility of jazz rhythms. He began to work the composition out in his mind, and in just three weeks, he released *Rhapsody in Blue* to Paul Whiteman and his orchestra who premiered the piece at the now-famous concert in February of 1924. Perhaps even more fascinating than how quickly the piece was written is the fact that Gershwin was not able to complete the piano part before the night of the concert. Because of this, he was forced to improvise a vast amount of piano part himself in the moment.

This work proved to be the cornerstone of what has now become a type of music thoroughly separated from European influence and formalism and magnificently American. Originally written for piano and jazz band, the work was eventually transformed to be played in many different instrumentations including solo piano.