



The German Society of Pennsylvania

proudly presents

Claire Huangci



Sunday, January 13, 2019 at 3:00pm

The German Society of Pennsylvania
www.germansociety.org

611 Spring Garden Street
Philadelphia, PA 19123

Calendar of Events

January 2019

Fri. Jan. 18 Friday Film Fest: *In Zeiten des abnehmenden Lichts*, 6:30pm

February 2019

Tue. Feb. 5 Brown Bag Lunch Lecture by Mary Le Gierse, 12:00pm

Thurs. Feb. 7 Lecture by Thomas Kleine-Brockhoff, 7:00pm

Sat. Feb. 9 Buchclub, 1:30pm

Wed. Feb. 13 Konversationsabend: Punch and Stories, 6:00pm

Fri. Feb. 15 Friday Film Fest: *Revanche*, 6:30pm

Sat. Feb. 23 8th Annual Bierfest, 2:00pm

March 2019

Sat. Mar. 9 Buchclub, 1:30pm

Mar. 9-10 New Chamber Ballet presents *Stray Bird*, show times TBA

Wed. Mar. 13 Konversationsabend: Feldmarschall Josef von Radetzky, 6:00pm

Fri. Mar. 15 Friday Film Fest: *Winnetou—der letzte Kampf*, 6:30pm

...**Save the date for our next “Wister and More!” concerts:**

Sun. Feb. 10 Elissa Lee Koljonen and Natalie Zhu

This violin and piano duo will present works by Vitali, Franck, Beethoven, and Sarasate.

Sun. Mar. 17 Pyxis Piano Quartet with baritone Grant Youngblood

Program will include music by J.C. Bach and Astor Piazzolla, as well as new works by Chuck Holdeman.

Sun. Apr. 14 The Casimir Trio

The Casimir Trio will present Mozart's Violin Sonata, K. 378; David Finko's Piano Trio (2018); and Smetana's Piano Trio, Op. 15.

Sun. May 12 EStrella Piano Duo

“Tales from the East”, featuring works by Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, Stravinsky, and more

All of our events are open to the public.

We welcome members and non-members alike.

Most events require tickets. Please call or email the office to inquire about purchasing:

215.627.2332 | info@germansociety.org

Claire Huangci PROGRAM

Sonata No. 26 in E-flat Major, Op. 81a	Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
Sonata No. 27 in E minor, Op. 90	Ludwig van Beethoven
Ballade No. 1 in G Minor, Op. 23	Frederic Chopin (1810-1849)

- Intermission -

Morceaux de Fantaisie, Prelude in C-Sharp Minor, Op. 3, No. 2	Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)
Preludes No. 1-7, Op. 23	Sergei Rachmaninoff
Preludes No. 4-6, Op. 32	Sergei Rachmaninoff

There will be one 15-minute intermission. We offer refreshments from our bar during that time. Your ticket to our concert also invites you to a complimentary reception with the artists in the Ratskeller (downstairs) following the performance.

Program Notes

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

"Listen carefully to the three opening chords of Beethoven's *Piano Sonata No. 26 in E-flat Major, Op. 81a*. For Beethoven, these chords outlined the three broken syllables of the word "*Le-be-wohl*," or "Fare-thee-well," which he inscribed in the manuscript....the first two chords set up our expectations for something fairly predictable, while the third chord delivers a surprise, taking us to a completely new place.

"Beethoven's "*Les Adieux*" ("Fairwell") Piano Sonata was completed on May 4, 1809 as Napoleon's army invaded Vienna. Among the fleeing aristocrats was Beethoven's sponsor and composition and piano student, Archduke Rudolf (1788-1831). In addition to this Sonata, Beethoven dedicated a handful of other significant works to the Archduke, including the "Emperor" Piano Concerto, the Op. 97 Piano Trio, the Tenth (and last) Violin Sonata, and the monumental choral work, *Missa solemnis*. A year earlier in 1808, Napoleon's brother, the King of Westphalia, granted Beethoven an offer of employment. Determined to keep Beethoven in Vienna, Archduke Rudolf promised to provide the composer with income for the rest of his life, apparently remaining good to his word.

"This is Beethoven's only sonata to include a program- in this case, a reference to the Archduke's forced evacuation. The first movement is titled, *Das Lebewohl* ("The Farewell"). The sec-

ond movement, *Abwesenheit* ("The Absence") is filled with melancholy solitude. The third, *Das Wiedersehen* ("The Return") sparkles with joyful exuberance, including Haydnesque jokes in the form of sudden, jolting fortes. Just before the close of the final movement, there is an intimate moment of quiet reflection, perhaps gratitude, in which hints of the first movement's "lebewohl" motive return.

"Listen to the way the opening chords are transformed throughout the first movement. This motive is so infused in the DNA of the music that it seems to be the seed for the entire movement. In the exposition, you'll hear the originally descending melodic line in contrary motion between the bass and top voice....In the development section, the motive searches for a way forward. In the final bars, it fades into the distance."

—Timothy Judd

Sonata No.27 in E minor, Op.90 (Conflict between head and heart — Conversation with the beloved)

"*Op.90* is one sonata for which Beethoven provided descriptive titles, albeit in jest. The first movement was intended to be an affectionate joke at the expense of his friend, the Count von Lichnowsky, to whom Beethoven dedicated the sonata and who was about to embark on a second marriage against the wishes of his family. The second movement presumably afforded Lichnowsky a consoling vision of domestic bliss. We have it from the composer's biographer, Anton Schindler, that both men laughed loudly when, at Lichnowsky's request for the meaning of the sonata, Beethoven told him that the work was a musical representation of his love life.

"The fact that Beethoven dedicated the work to Lichnowsky without publishing the titles has caused many commentators to suggest that they are best forgotten and that the work should be enjoyed as pure music in its own right. I disagree completely.

"I believe that the titles Beethoven readily offered to Lichnowsky betray the work's entire *raison d'être*, and the laughter accompanying the original disclosure was probably as much to conceal embarrassment as to share good humour. I take the absence of the titles from the published version to indicate a perfectly normal sensitivity on Beethoven's part in deciding not to make explicitly public the private joke shared with his friend."

—Brian Chapman ©1996

Frederic Chopin (1810–1849)

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

"Opus 23 was the first of four ballades Chopin composed between 1835 and 1842, after leaving Poland. The term "ballade" had originally denoted a form of poetic narrative in medieval and Renaissance French poetry. Chopin was the first to apply the term to a single-movement instrumental work. While the four ballades are said to have been inspired by the writings of Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz, Chopin was not fond of programmatic music, and did not conceive them to correspond to specific narratives. He believed the music should tell its own story."

"The form of this piece is a variation of sonata form, in which the two main themes appear in reverse order in the recapitulation. The Largo introduction wanders around the Neapolitan

chord, before introducing the lyrical waltz that is the first theme. This theme serves as an anchor throughout the piece, because it is presented in the same way each of the three times it appears. The second theme is also presented three times, but Chopin gives each iteration a different character. It is presented first in the exposition as a beautifully expressive melody. The development section is hugely exciting, and focuses on the manipulation of the second theme in different contexts, including a full statement in a grand, thick chordal texture. The recapitulation presents the themes in reverse order, before a thunderous *appassionato* passage of parallel sixths launches into the turbulent coda marked *Presto con fuoco*. Robert Schumann commented upon examination of the ballade: "I received a new Ballade from Chopin. It seems to be a work closest to his genius..."

—unattributed sample materials, Samford University

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

Morceaux de Fantaisie, Prelude in C-sharp Minor Opus 3, no. 2

Rachmaninoff did not publish his preludes in a single ordered set. He wrote the first prelude in 1892 at age 19 as part of his Opus 3, *Morceaux de fantaisie* ("Fantasy Pieces"). The other works in that set were of a different character and bore other titles. By 1903 Rachmaninoff had completed another 10 preludes, published as Opus 23, and in 1910 another 13, published as Opus 32. In the years between the composition of the first and last preludes, Rachmaninoff had become an international star as composer, pianist, and conductor. To his dismay, the piece that audiences demanded most often was the earliest of his preludes. He began to refuse to play the piece, having tired of it.

- Betsy Schwarm

Preludes Op. 23 and 32

The music of Sergei Rachmaninoff seems to glimmer out from somewhere deep in the Russian soul. With the minor mode as his preferred tonal colouring, Rachmaninoff crafted achingly nostalgic melodies *à la Tchaikovsky* alongside sharply chiseled passages of muscular pianism that evoke the heel-clicking traditions of the Russian military. Prominent in his sound world is the ringing of bells large and small, from the tintinnabulation of sleigh bells to the weighty pendulum swings of cathedral bells evoked so dramatically in the opening of his Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor Op. 18.

Rachmaninoff's massive mitt of a hand, that could easily stretch a 12th, gave him magisterial control over the keyboard and the freedom to create complex two-hand textures blooming with countermelodies and a wealth of decorative ornament. These traits are particularly concentrated in his two sets of Preludes Op. 23 (1902) and Op. 32 (1910), works more akin in their scale and ambition to the Chopin Études Opp. 10 & 25 than to the same composer's brief Preludes Op. 28.

The Op. 23 set of preludes begins with a whimper. The hauntingly fragile melody of the *Prelude in F sharp minor* Op. 23 No. 1 calls out tenderly in timid, tentative phrases to an almost indifferent accompaniment of constantly wavering chromatic figures. This is Rachmaninoff at his most intimate, his most confessional, his most vulnerable.

The majestic *Prelude in B flat major* Op. 23 No. 2 projects the power and bravura of the virtu-

oso pianist with a thunderous left-hand accompaniment pattern sweeping over 3 octaves to set up a forceful right-hand protagonist that strikes grandiose poses until it discovers its own beating heart in the more varied – but equally tumultuous – middle section.

While the *Prelude in D minor* Op. 23 No. 3 is marked *Tempo di minuetto*, there is a 'snap-to-attention' military crispness to its dotted rhythms and stop-and-go pacing that points more to the parade ground than to the palace ballroom.

The *Prelude in D major* Op. 23 No. 4 is a lulling nocturne. Its melody sings out from the middle of the texture, swaddled at first by a sonic glow of bell-like overtones, then topped with a gently undulating descant, and finally crowned with echoing chimes in the highest register.

The real jackboot-strutting military march of the set is the *Prelude in G minor* Op. 23 No. 5, perhaps second in fame only to the celebrated *Prelude in C sharp minor* Op. 3 No. 2. Punchy, menacing, and triumphant by turns, it yields in its middle section to a bout of soldierly homesickness to spin out a lyrical melody of yearning sighs and wistful counter melodies.

Unruffled calm reigns over the elegiac musings of the *Prelude in E flat major* Op. 23 No. 6, that offers as much melodic and contrapuntal interest in its ornately winding accompaniment in 16ths as in the 8ths and quarters of the placid melody floating on top of it.

The *Prelude in C minor* Op. 23 No. 7 is a tour de force of whirlwind energy and boldly flickering tonal colour that sweeps across vast swathes of the keyboard in myriad dark figurations, a *moto perpetuo* prelude that emerges from the darkness for a triumphant final cadence in C major.

- Donald G. Gislason 2018

Prelude op. 32, no. 4 in E Minor, August 28, 1910. This is the longest and most multifaceted of all of the preludes. Some feel it may suggest an unrevealed visual or literary inspiration, with its histrionic character being compared to Chopin's *Scherzo in E Major*. Full of ingenious ideas, it contains a variety of colors, phrasings, and sonorities. It is brilliant and extremely difficult. The technical nature of the piece may have caused its careful craftsmanship to be overlooked. Along with tempo changes, from *Allegro con brio*, to *Piu vivo*, *Lento*, and finally *Presto*, Rachmaninoff uses changes of meter and rhythmic devices to vary the mood and content of the work. Texturally, the music is chordal with contrapuntal sections. The three sections and coda of the piece are based on a three-note motive and a staccato triplet figure....

Prelude op. 32, no. 5 in G, August 23, 1910. This quiet, mysterious prelude contrasts significantly with the rest of the Opus. 'It evokes the idyllic peace and purity of the Elysian Fields' and is a 'kind of fantasy in keeping with the song cycle without words character that exists in these later preludes' (Vladimir Ashkenazy). It is another prelude that is a musical picture of Spring. Written in a form much simpler than most of the Preludes, it contains a reflective melody sustained against a rising and falling broken chord accompaniment in quintuplets. The middle section of the piece retains its serene nature and simply moves to G Minor as a means of contrast. This work is primarily musically challenging. The pianist must be sensitive in presenting the smooth, melodic line while keeping the accompanying, rhythmical figure delicate and even, especially in sections containing cross rhythms.

Prelude op. 32, no. 6 in F Minor, August 25, 1910 This prelude was written within two days of

the preceding prelude but creates a total contrast with it. Ashkenazy describes the piece as 'stormy and tragic, plunging into abysses of frenziedly jagged, chromatic despair.'

From "2003 An Annotated Catalogue of the Major Piano Works of Sergei Rachmaninoff" by Angela Edwards Glover (citations omitted)

About Claire Huangci

The young American pianist of Chinese descent, winner of the first prize and Mozart prize at the 2018 Geza Anda Competition, has succeeded in establishing herself as a highly respected artist, captivating audiences with her "*radiant virtuosity, artistic sensitivity, keen interactive sense and subtle auditory dramaturgy*" (Salzburger Nachrichten).

Claire Huangci began her international career at the age of nine with grants, concert performances and prizes, becoming the youngest participant to receive second prize at the International ARD Music Competition in 2011. Only in her later teenage years did she finally feel more and more that this instrument was to be her vocation. She received significant input from her teachers Eleanor Sokoloff and Gary Graffman at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia before studying under Arie Vardi at the University of Music, Drama and Media in Hanover. She has assisted Professor Vardi since her graduation in spring 2016.



Chopin's music gave Claire Huangci her artistic breakthrough when she won first prizes at the Chopin Competitions in Darmstadt in 2009, as well as in Miami in 2010. She has since proved her great versatility with an unusually broad repertoire, which includes a large number of contemporary works. Claire Huangci has performed in solo recitals and as a partner with international orchestras such as the Mozarteumorchester Salzburg, Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra (under Sir Roger Norrington), Tonhalle-Orchester Zurich, Münchner Kammerorchester, China Philharmonic Orchestra and Vancouver, Santa Fe and Moscow Radio Symphonies at international concert venues that include the Carnegie Hall, Wiener Konzerthaus, Konzerthaus Berlin, Gasteig Munich, Gewandhaus Leipzig, la Salle Cortot, Oji Hall Tokyo and the Symphony Hall in Osaka. She has also made guest appearances at festivals such as the Kissinger Sommer, Verbier Festival, Menuhin Festival Gstaad, Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival, Rheingau Musik Festival and the Schwetzingen SWR Festival.

After a busy last season with highlights including solo debuts at the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Klavier Festival Ruhr, and a tour through China with the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra and Cornelius Meister, she begins the 18/19 season with concerts with the Bern Symphony orchestra under Mario Venzago. Further appearances will lead her to the Vienna Konzerthaus, Franz Liszt Akademie Budapest, Zurich Tonhalle, Tokyo Suntory Hall, and Washington DC Smithsonian Institute.

After the releases of her debut CD with solo works of Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev and her prizewinning double album of Scarlatti sonatas, (German Record Critics' Award and Gramophone Editors Choice) she released a celebrating recording of the complete Chopin nocturnes in Spring 2017.

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We also wish to acknowledge with thanks the generous support received from The Philadelphia Cultural Fund for this season of our music program.