HOROWITZ PIANO SERIES

Boris Berman, artistic director

Boris Berman

Wednesday, November 8, 2023 | 7:30 pm
Morse Recital Hall in Sprague Memorial Hall

Yale SCHOOL OF MUSIC
José García-León, Dean
Program

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart 1756–1791

Sonata in B-flat major, K. 333
I. Allegro
II. Andante cantabile
III. Allegretto grazioso

Arnold Schoenberg 1874–1951

Five Pieces for Piano, Op. 23
I. Sehr langsam
II. Sehr rasch
III. Langsam
IV. Schwungvoll
V. Walzer

Claude Debussy 1862–1918

Six épigraphes antiques, L. 131
I. Pour invoquer Pan, dieu du vent d’été
   (To invoke Pan, god of the summer wind)
II. Pour un tombeau sans nom
   (For a nameless tomb)
III. Pour que la nuit soit propice
   (For the night to be propitious)
IV. Pour la danseuse aux crotales
   (For the dancer with finger cymbals)
V. Pour l’Égyptienne
   (For the Egyptian woman)
VI. Pour remercier la pluie au matin
   (To thank the morning rain)

INTERMISSION
Sergei Prokofiev
1891–1953

**Visions fugitives, Op. 22**
I. Lentamente
II. Andante
III Allegretto
IV. Animato
V. Molto giocoso
VI. Con eleganza
VII. Pittaresco (Arpa)
VIII. Commodo
IX. Allegro tranquillo
X. Ridicolosamente
XI. Con vivacità
XII. Assai moderato
XIII. Allegretto
XIV. Feroce
XV. Inquieto
XVI. Dolente
XVII. Poetico
XVIII. Con una dolce lentezza
XIX. Presto agitatissimo e molto accentuato
XX. Lento irrealmente

**Sonata No. 5 in C major (second version), Op. 135**
I. Allegro tranquillo
II. Andantino
III. Un poco allegretto
Boris Berman, piano

A performer well known to audiences in fifty countries on six continents, Boris Berman regularly appears with orchestras, on recital series, and at festivals around the world. He studied at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory with distinguished pianist Lev Oborin.

An active recording artist and Grammy Award nominee, Berman was the first pianist to record Prokofiev's complete solo piano works. Some of Berman's other acclaimed recordings include all of Scriabin's piano sonatas and a performance of piano works by Shostakovich that received the Edison Classic Award (the Dutch equivalent of the Grammy). His double CD of Debussy Preludes and other works on Palais des Degustateurs label has received the Choc mark from the French Classica. This was followed by four more acclaimed releases on the same label that featured works by Haydn, Schubert, Brahms, and Silvestrov.

At the Yale School of Music, Berman teaches a studio of graduate students, coaches chamber groups, and heads the Piano Department. He is the Artistic Director of the School's Horowitz Piano Series and frequently gives solo and collaborative performances as part of that series and others. Berman regularly performs and coaches at the Norfolk Chamber Music Festival/Yale Summer School of Music, teaches master classes throughout the world, and adjudicates national and international competitions.

Berman has authored two books published by Yale University Press: Prokofiev’s Piano Sonatas: A Guide for the Listener and the Performer (2008) and Notes from the Pianist’s Bench (2000; the new, electronically enhanced edition 2017). These books were translated into several languages. He is also the editor of the critical edition of Prokofiev’s piano sonatas (Shanghai Music Publishing House, 2011).
Program Notes

Introduction
Boris Berman

When preparing this program, I thought about different juxtapositions and combinations that would highlight certain aspects of the individual compositions through the conversations created between them. The program opens and closes with sonatas by Mozart and Prokofiev, respectively. These serve as bookends, and through their juxtaposition the Prokofiev Sonata reveals its Neo-Classical qualities more clearly.

The middle of the program is devoted to short pieces composed between 1913 and 1923, a period that gave birth to twentieth-century modernism. The short pieces by Debussy, Schoenberg, and Prokofiev reveal a rich tapestry of different artistic styles, trends, and traditions that coexisted during this fascinating time. Two compositions by Prokofiev, Visions fugitives and Sonata No. 5, were written at different stages of his life. By hearing them one after the other, the listener is able to trace the evolution of this composer’s musical language.

Sonata in B-flat major, K. 333
Mozart
Patrick Campbell Jankowski

The term “galant” is often used to describe music of the late Baroque and early Classical eras, in opposition to the complexity of preceding musical styles. Mozart certainly inherited the lightness of touch, clarity, and grace that “galant” implies, and it can be unmistakably heard in this sonata. It opens with an effortlessly elegant gesture of falling tones: it almost seems to bow. Throughout the opening movement, Mozart plays with density of texture, varying between spare soloistic lines and those with a more full accompaniment. The central movement, aria-like in character, is the most outwardly “feeling” of the three, sacrificing just a bit of its restrained elegance for the sake of conveying emotion. The finale is once again lighthearted, and includes a few moments of flash, including in the form of a cadenza.

Five Pieces for Piano, Op. 23
SCHOENBERG
Patrick Campbell Jankowski

Arnold Schoenberg will likely always be remembered for expanding and reorganizing the language of Western music. His experiments in serialism around a century ago, wherein he liberated the 12 pitches dividing each octave from their tonal magnetism, yielded a whole new way of thinking about, and listening to, music. These Five Pieces for Piano, dating from the early 1920s, are among a handful of works in which these experiments were “worked out.” The pieces were not written simultaneously, and each one deals with pitch organization differently. The often gentle, occasionally vaudevillian first piece, for instance, utilizes motives of only a few pitches which gradually evolve by shifting their range. Only in the final piece, a playful waltz, is a full row of 12 pitches utilized throughout. Schoenberg would go on to write music more firmly rooted in this serialist language, but here we encounter the very first inklings of this new way of thinking.
Six épigraphes antiques, L. 131

DEBUSSY

Patrick Campbell Jankowski

Claude Debussy’s instrumental music always seems to be in dialogue with some other artistic medium or sense. The titles that he gave his works either hint at or overtly state his extra-musical inspiration. These “Ancient Epigraphs” were first conceived for four-hand piano and derived from his own incidental music for a reading of poetry allegedly by Bilitis, who may have been a lover of Sappho, or who may not have existed at all. They are infused with sensuous (and sensual) imagery, and each one seems to fit its title perfectly. One can hear the shepherd’s flute of the god Pan in the opening, based on a pentatonic scale. The ringing metallic sounds of a dancer’s crotales can be heard in the fourth piece, and a deep drone accompanies the free flourishes of the “Egyptian woman.” The repeating, light taps of falling rain are unmistakable in the final piece in the set, but notice just how it stops.

Visions fugitives, Op. 22

PROKOFIEV

Patrick Campbell Jankowski

and the title in fact came later. After hearing them in a private performance, the poet Konstantin Balmont immediately wrote (in translation):

I do not know wisdom—leave that to others—I only turn transiences into verse.
In each fugitive vision I see worlds....

Each piece is strikingly individualistic. Chordal textures begin the first, sinuous lines and ringing bells the second. The fifth and sixth, each less than thirty seconds, are carnivalesque and joking. The very last piece, the longest of the set by far, seems almost to halt time and draw you inside, before fading away like a musical mirage.

Sonata No. 5 in C major, Op. 135

Boris Berman

The Sonata No. 5 in C major, composed in 1923 in Paris, is the only sonata that Prokofiev wrote during his sojourn in the West. He counted it among “the most chromatic of all my compositions. This was the effect of the Parisian atmosphere where complex patterns and dissonances were the accepted thing, and which fostered my predilection for complex thinking.”

The sonata’s dissonant harmonies and zig-zagging melodies blend curiously with the neoclassic simplicity of stylized cadences and Mozartian piano texture. In 1953, Prokofiev revised the Sonata and assigned the new version a new opus number, 135. It is this later version that is performed tonight.
About the Horowitz Piano Series

The Horowitz Recital Series was established in 2000 to honor the artistry of the great Ukrainian-American pianist Vladimir Horowitz (1903–1989), who chose to leave his papers to Yale upon his death in 1989. Today, Yale honors his legacy through the Horowitz Piano Series, which brings many of the world’s great keyboard artists to Yale and presents the distinguished pianists of the Yale faculty.

Emanuel Ax, Yefim Bronfman, and Radu Lupu are among the guest pianists who have performed at Yale. The series also presents pianists who are less known in the United States, such as Paul Lewis, Pierre Réach, and Mikhaïl Rudy.

Thank you for your support!

Become a Horowitz Piano Series patron and support our performance programs. Earn benefits ranging from preferred seating to invitations to special events.

» To join or for more information, visit music.yale.edu/support or contact us at (203) 432–4158.

PAUL HINDEMITH CIRCLE
$500–$749
Dr. Lorraine Siggins

HORATIO PARKER CIRCLE
$250–$499
Mr. & Mrs. Douglas J. Crowley
Jim Scala

SAMUEL SIMONS SANFORD CIRCLE
$125–$249
Anonymous
Henry & Joan Binder
Richard Sonder & Susan Monserud

GUSTAVE J. STOECKEL CIRCLE
$50–$124
Laura Berry & Bernard Hulin
Eduardo Groisman
Susan Holahan
Jon Resnik

List as of November 2, 2023
Upcoming Events at YSM

NOV 9  Yale Schola Cantorum with Danish National Vocal Ensemble
Institute of Sacred Music
7:30 p.m. | Woolsey Hall
Free admission

NOV 10 Carol Jantsch, *tuba*
Faculty Artist Series
7:30 p.m. | Morse Recital Hall
Free admission

NOV 12 Triton Trio
Faculty Artist Series
3 p.m. | Morse Recital Hall
Free admission

NOV 15 Lunchtime Chamber Music
12:30 p.m. | Morse Recital Hall
Free admission

NOV 16 Peter Oundjian, *principal conductor*
Yale Philharmonia
7:30 p.m. | Woolsey Hall
Tickets start at $13, Yale faculty/staff start at $9, Students free (ticket required)

NOV 17 Yale Voxtet with The Sebastians
Institute of Sacred Music
7:30 p.m. | Morse Recital Hall
Free admission

YALE SCHOOL OF MUSIC BOX OFFICE
Sprague Memorial Hall, 470 College Street New Haven, CT 06511
203 432–4158 | music-tickets.yale.edu

Wshu Public Radio  WSHU 91.1 FM is the media sponsor of the Yale School of Music.

Connect with us

@yale.music  yalemusic  @yalemusic  YaleSchoolofMusicOfficial

If you do not intend to save your program, please recycle it in the baskets at the exit doors.