

DANIIL TRIFONOV
PIANO

KAROL SZYMANOWSKI
(1882-1937)

Piano Sonata No. 3, Op. 36
Presto-Adagio-Assai vivace-Fuga

CLAUDE DEBUSSY
(1862-1918)

Pour le piano, L. 95
Prélude
Sarabande
Toccata

SERGEI PROKOFIEV
(1891-1953)

Sarcasms, Op. 17
Tempestoso
Allegro rubato
Allegro precipitato
Smanioso
Precipitosissimo

INTERMISSION

JOHANNES BRAHMS
(1833-1897)

Piano Sonata No. 3 in F Minor, Op. 5
Allegro maestoso
Andante espressivo
Scherzo. Allegro energico – Trio
Intermezzo (Rückblick). Andante molto
Finale. Allegro moderato ma rubato



DANIIL TRIFONOV

piano

DANIIL TRIFONOV

Grammy Award-winning pianist Daniil Trifonov—*Musical America*’s 2019 Artist of the Year—has established a reputation as a solo artist, champion of the concerto repertoire, chamber and vocal collaborator, and composer. Combining consummate technique with rare sensitivity and depth, his performances are a perpetual source of wonder to audiences and critics alike. With *Transcendental*, the Liszt collection that marked his third title as an exclusive Deutsche Grammophon artist, he won the Grammy Award for Best Instrumental Solo Album of 2018. As *The Times* of London notes, he is “without question the most astounding pianist of our age.”

In the 2021-22 season, Trifonov released *Bach: The Art of Life* on Deutsche Grammophon, toured a recital program in Europe based on the album, and toured a different program in the U.S. He played Brahms’s First Piano Concerto with the Dallas Symphony under Fabio Luisi and Philharmonia Zurich under Gianandrea Noseda, as well as Mozart’s Ninth “Jeunehomme” Piano Concerto with Antonio Pappano and Rome’s Orchestra dell’Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia on a European tour. He also performed all five Beethoven Piano Concertos in various combinations with eight different orchestras: the New York Philharmonic, Cincinnati Symphony, New Jersey Symphony, Munich Philharmonic, Mariinsky Orchestra, Orchestre des Champs-Élysées, Budapest Festival Orchestra, and Toronto Symphony. Finally, he gave the world premiere performances of Mason Bates’s new Piano Concerto, composed for him during the pandemic, with the co-commissioning Philadelphia Orchestra, New Jersey Symphony, Israel Philharmonic, and San Francisco Symphony.

In recent seasons Trifonov served as Artist-in-Residence of the New York Philharmonic—a residency that included the New York premiere of his own Piano Quintet—and curated and performed a seven-concert, season-long Carnegie Hall “Perspectives” series. He has played solo recitals around the world since his Carnegie Hall debut in

2012-13, and his discography on Deutsche Grammophon includes a live recording of his Carnegie recital debut, *Chopin Evocations*, and three volumes of Rachmaninoff works with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Yannick Nézet-Séguin, with one receiving a 2021 Grammy nomination and another named *BBC Music's* 2019 Concerto Recording of the Year. In 2016 he was named *Gramophone's* Artist of the Year and in 2021 he was made a "Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres" by the French government.

During the 2010-11 season, Trifonov won medals at three of the music world's most prestigious competitions: Third Prize in Warsaw's Chopin Competition, First Prize in Tel Aviv's Rubinstein Competition, and both First Prize and Grand Prix in Moscow's Tchaikovsky Competition. He began his musical training at the age of five, attended Moscow's Gnessin School of Music, and continued his piano studies with Sergei Babayan at the Cleveland Institute of Music.

NOTES

IN BRIEF

BORN: October 6, 1882, Tymoshivka, Ukraine

DIED: March 29, 1937, Lausanne, Switzerland

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: Tonight marks the first performance of this work on our series.

DURATION: 16 minutes

KAROL
SZYMANOWSKI:
PIANO SONATA
NO. 3 OP. 36

Karol Szymanowski, the most important Polish composer in the first half of the twentieth century, was the direct heir to Frédéric Chopin. A marvelous composer, his music is beginning to achieve the recognition and performances it richly deserves.

Szymanowski was born in a region of Poland that had been annexed to the Czarist empire. His father, a member

of the Polish landed gentry, was ardently patriotic, and encouraged his five children to cultivate their national heritage. The entire family was artistic. Young Karol was sent to Vienna at age 13, where he heard Wagner operas, an experience that wrought a profound influence on his early development. Later he was inspired by the works of Stravinsky and Debussy. Ultimately, he found his truest voice in the music of his native land.

Szymanowski's early compositions reveal a fascinating mix of stylistic ingredients absorbed from others. Foremost among his models were Chopin and Scriabin. Szymanowski's friend Ludomir Różycki later recalled:

Above all he loved and revered Chopin, and immediately after Chopin's music came the piano works of Scriabin in his preferences. When he wrote his [First] Piano Sonata, I found Szymanowski many times sitting at the piano, studying in great detail the structure of piano passages by Chopin and Scriabin.

In terms of pianistic figuration and heavy chromaticism, both those composers' imprints are clear in all three of Szymanowski's piano sonatas. Structurally, however, the Third Sonata shows Szymanowski seeking other models. It is organized as four movements played without pause, linked by related material shared among its sections, and culminating in a fugue. The form is clearly descended from Franz Liszt's Sonata in B Minor, which is also a cyclic work, with no breaks between movements, and concluding with a fugue. An equally important model was Beethoven, who wrote splendid fugues to conclude his *Hammerklavier* Sonata and Sonata in A-flat Major, Opus 110. Liszt and Beethoven link Szymanowski to the German Romantic tradition.

Szymanowski's Sonata No. 3 opens with delicate, understated, atmospheric gestures. Its dense chromaticism eludes a firm key center, yet never quite abandons tonality. As in the piano works of Szymanowski's French contemporaries Debussy and Ravel, pedaling is extremely important, subtly blurring chords that include sevenths, ninths, and elevenths.

It does not take long for the feather-light Presto opening to explode. Thunderous octaves in the bass and chordal melodies in the keyboard's high register are knitted together with complex inner voices. Much of the score breaks to three staves (rather than the customary two). Szymanowski often uses flexible rhythms, for example switching from 7/8 to 3/8 to 5/8, underscoring the harmonic instability with a rhythmic unsteadiness.

The sonata is episodic and sectional, with waves that sometimes gently ripple, and sometimes forcefully pound, seeming to transcend the sonic possibilities of the piano. Attentive listeners will discern Szymanowski's delineation of the four connected movements by paying attention to tempo and thematic fragments. His opening movement is a modified sonata form with clearly contrasting themes. The second, marked Adagio, is exceptionally chromatic: as close to atonality as Szymanowski gets in this sonata. His Scherzando, by contrast, is inflected with blues-like harmonies that may even remind us of Gershwin. (That is extraordinary, considering that Szymanowski composed the sonata in 1917.) The concluding fugue, marked *Scherzando e buffo*, merges the stern discipline of contrapuntal writing with the sardonic edge of the preceding scherzo. Szymanowski re-introduces both rhythmic and melodic figures from earlier in the sonata, tying it all together convincingly. Despite its dazzling virtuosity, the Third Sonata contains magical moments of lyricism that temper the eye-popping muscular moments.

CLAUDE DEBUSSY:
POUR LE PIANO,
L. 95

IN BRIEF

BORN: August 22, 1862, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France

DIED: March 25, 1918, Paris, France

FIRST PERFORMANCE: January 11, 1902 in Paris, Salle Érard, Société Nationale de Musique: Ricard Viñes, piano

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: Tonight marks the first performance of this work on our series.

DURATION: 11 minutes

Pour le piano is a surprisingly dry title for a man of Debussy's literary and artistic sensibilities. Yet the very absence of programmatic titles suggests that he was moving toward a new, original, and self-assured approach to the piano. Composed between 1894 and 1901 and published in 1901, *Pour le piano* was preceded by several of Debussy's most beloved pieces, including the two *Arabesques*, *Rêverie*, and the *Suite Bergamasque* (which includes *Clair de lune*).

This three-movement suite represents a decisive move forward in Debussy's relationship with the piano and heralds the decade of his greatest keyboard works: the two books of *Préludes*, *L'isle joyeuse*, the *Images*, and the *Études*. At the same time, his Baroque movement titles for *Pour le piano* – *Prélude*, *Sarabande*, and *Toccata* – reaffirm a connection with music of the past: not only the keyboard masters of France's golden age, but also their European contemporaries, specifically Bach and Scarlatti.

The *Prélude*, *Pour le piano*'s first movement, is assertive and forthright, as if announcing an important event. As the French pianist Maurice Dumesnil (1886–1974) observed:

It would be a mistake to believe that Debussy always spoke in terms of softness, elusive approach, two-pedal effects, etc. In the suite *Pour le piano*, for instance, it was another story. Here he demanded a totally different conception, one of robust precision.

Bold and aggressive, this Prélude breathes a healthy vitality, sparkling with *glissandi* and fortissimo climaxes that explode out of agitated crescendos. It has the energy of Bach's organ toccatas: riotous, self-indulgent, and overwhelmingly confident.

The Sarabande is a dance rhythm, almost certainly of Spanish or Afro-Spanish origin. This one is adapted from an earlier piece that Debussy composed in 1894. He dedicated the movement to Mme E. Rouart (*née* Yvonne Lerolle), with whom he had been involved at the time, revising the movement before incorporating it into *Pour le piano*. The outer movements are dedicated to two of his piano students, Mme Gerard de Romilly and Nicolas Coronio.

Debussy's concluding Toccata is free and passionate. In the tradition of keyboard showpieces, it lives up to its namesake. Debussy's repeated arabesques take on their own nuance and color. He had learned these techniques of varied repetition from travels in Russia. In *Pour le piano*, he melded them with French heritage and his own bold sense of harmony, texture, and pianistic color.

IN BRIEF

BORN: April 23, 1891, Sontsivka, Ukraine

DIED: March 5, 1953, Moscow, Russia

FIRST PERFORMANCE: November 1916 in Petrograd:
Sergei Prokofiev, piano

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: March 20, 1985, Mark Zeltser, piano

DURATION: 11 minutes

SERGEI PROKOFIEV: SARCASMS, OP.17

Prokofiev was a superb pianist and composed for his instrument from childhood through his final year. His nine mature piano sonatas are arguably the most

significant such group since Beethoven's. A tenth sonata was incomplete at Prokofiev's death, and an eleventh was planned. More than 100 additional solo keyboard pieces survive. They favor a percussive approach to the piano. Motoric rhythms and dense textures alternate with a poignant lyricism familiar from Prokofiev's later ballets.

He composed *Sarcasms* at the height of his *enfant terrible* period. Barely twenty, Prokofiev had jolted audiences in Moscow and St. Petersburg at the première of his First Piano Concerto in 1912 with its aggressive rhythms and unorthodox treatment of melodic and harmonic material. In *Sarcasms*, he distilled for solo piano what he had achieved in that remarkable work. These five short pieces take their cue from the metric flexibility of Stravinsky's *Sacre du printemps* and the tonal ambiguity of *Pétrouchka*, adding a primitive, ferocious pianism that was uniquely Prokofiev's.

The composer was the soloist at the St. Petersburg première of *Sarcasms* in November 1916 on a series called Evenings of Modern Music. Two influential critics, Vyacheslav Karatigin and Walter Nuvel, had heard Prokofiev's début recital in December 1908 in a program of his own works. They were quick to perceive this precocious and gifted youth – then still a teenager – as a valuable and effective celebrant of Russian music. Six years later, Nuvel and another critic, Norok, persuaded Prokofiev to shorten his original title, *Sarcastic Pieces*, to the more concise *Sarcasms*.

The older generation of Russian musicians, including Nikolai Medtner and Sergei Rachmaninoff, had no use for these aggressive pieces when Prokofiev played them in Moscow. Such extreme dissonance and clashing harmonies made no sense to them. Prokofiev's prodigious technique made him adventurous in his approach to the keyboard. His expressionist tempo and character indications go hand in hand with a free approach to form. Rife with dissonance, the five *Sarcasms* have a subliminal terror that is at once unsettling and exciting. Prokofiev's epigraph for these pieces reveals an ironic subtext:

Sometimes we laugh maliciously at someone or something, but when we look closer, we see how pathetic and unfortunate is the object of our laughter. Then we become uncomfortable and the laughter rings in our ears – laughing now at us.

IN BRIEF

BORN: May 7, 1833, Hamburg, Germany

DIED: April 3, 1897, Vienna, Austria

FIRST PERFORMANCE: October 23, 1854 in Leipzig (movements 2 and 3); December 1854 in Magdeburg (complete)

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: February 27, 2013, Stephen Hough, piano

DURATION: 28 minutes

JOHANNES BRAHMS: PIANO SONATA NO. 3 IN F MINOR, OP. 5

The earlier works of Brahms's career are dominated by piano music. Piano was his instrument, and he made his name as a pianist even before Robert Schumann hailed him as the composing genius he knew the young Brahms to be. All three of Brahms's solo piano sonatas were among his first published compositions, constituting his Opuses 1, 2, and 5. All require considerable strength and formidable technique. Conceived on a large scale, the Brahms sonatas in many respects pay clear homage to the major piano sonatas of Beethoven.

Writer Walter Niemann called Opus 5 "*the* Brahms sonata *par excellence*." It is the most frequently performed of the three piano sonatas, and distinguishes itself from the others by virtue of its five movements, as opposed to the customary three or four in a large work. (The extra movement is the fourth, entitled *Rückblick*, "retrospect" or "backward glance"). Brahms composed most of the work in 1853; he was barely 20.

Another distinctive characteristic in the Third Sonata is the program for the slow movement. Except in his vocal music, Brahms steered clear of extramusical associations to his music: he created absolute music, music that stood on its own, without association with literature or the visual arts. Hence it is especially unusual for him to have included a verse by the German poet Otto Inkerman, who wrote under the pseudonym C.O. Sternau. The lines appear at the beginning of the score to the slow movement:

The twilight falls, the moonlight gleams
Two heads are united in lovers' dreams
And embrace one another in rapture

Surely this is the most romantic imaginable facet of Brahms's creative imagination. Schumann loved this movement for its dreamy quality. The music is breathtakingly lovely without the evocative verse, but is it not even more delicious with that stage setting? This Andante is suffused with ineffable sweetness, eradicating all memory of the thunderous theatrical opening of the sonata. It is radiant with the serenity and joy of an intimate love affair.

With the Scherzo, Brahms returns abruptly to the virility and aggressive energy of the opening movement. Its contrasting Trio, in D-flat major, is almost a hymn of thanksgiving; otherwise this is the most conventional movement in the sonata. It is followed by the interpolated extra movement, *Rückblick*, whose title indicates part of its musical function. Brahms recalls the theme of the Andante in the minor key, and the drum-like figure in the bass gives it the feel of a funeral march.

The finale starts out in a tarantella rhythm with a scherzando character. It gradually reveals itself to be a modified rondo, whose first episode is strikingly Schumannesque. After exploration of the jumpy

tarantella idea, Brahms introduces a chorale in D-flat major (the key of the luminous slow movement) that increases in importance as the movement continues. Eventually the two meld together, coalescing in an extensive, dazzling coda in F major.

Program Notes by Laurie Shulman ©2022

MUSIC IN THE GALLERIES

Patrick Hyatte, violin and Ernie Carbajal, cello

Sunday, May 8, 2022

Concerts at 11:00 am and 1:00 pm

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Patrick Hyatte



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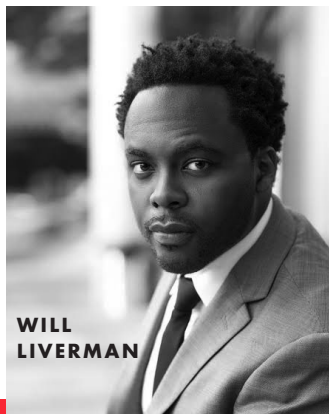


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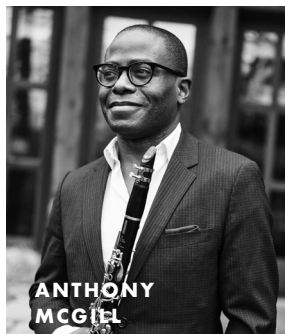
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Ernie Carbajal, cello

Sun, May 8, 2022

11:00 am & 1:00 pm

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