



The Music Department at
Gonzaga University
presents

Henry Mauser

Junior Piano Recital

from the studio of Greg Presley

Monday, March 22, 2021
6:30 PM

Gonzaga University Myrtle Woldson Performing
Arts Center

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of a
Bachelor of Arts in Music Performance Concentration

Program

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| Sonata No. 31 in A \flat Major, op. 110 | Ludwig van Beethoven |
| I. Moderato cantabile molto espressivo | (1770-1827) |
| II. Allegro molto | |
| III. Adagio ma non troppo – Fuga. Allegro ma non troppo | |
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| Sonata in E Major, K. 380 | Domenico Scarlatti |
| | (1685-1757) |
| | |
| Sonata No. 3 in A Minor, op. 28 | Sergei Prokofiev |
| | (1891-1953) |

Program Notes

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) is a towering figure of the Western classical tradition who composed in many forms and had a massive influence on subsequent generations. Considered to be a catalyst bridging the Classical and Romantic eras of music, his innovations demonstrate this legacy quite clearly, pushing instruments, musical structures, and their emotional capacity to new heights. The Piano Sonata op. 110 is prime example of such innovations. Being the 31st of his 32 piano sonatas, it is part of his late period output when he was well established in his own idioms and personhood, engaging himself with intellectual musical ideas to be shaped and unfolded by his experienced hand. He was severely deaf at this point, which was devastating to him personally, and just before writing this work he had overcome a life-threatening illness.¹ Accordingly, the work is characterized by musical gestures and architecture depicting striving, particularly by means of rising motives thwarted by harmonic and dynamic collapses, and the overall structure is a narrative of stately triumph in the face of quite tormenting adversity.

The first movement is a lyrical instance of sonata-allegro form with a particular warmth, thinness of texture, and delicate intricacy, which still is able to be forceful. The extremes of the piano are often exploited and emphasized, giving a strong impression of insistence and perhaps implying dissatisfaction with the instrument itself and a desire to escape its constraints. The second movement quotes two German folk tunes which would have been recognizable at the time of the work's composition, the lyrics of the first translating to "our cat had had kittens" and the second roughly to "I am down and out."² It is difficult to take the movement too seriously with such crude allusions, and indeed the music itself is jaunty and amusing, with witty syncopation and a general sense of frivolity, though it has gravity with regard to its contribution to the overall sonata at least by way of contrast. Finally, the third movement is a daunting emotional journey consisting of two alternating operatic ariosos and fugues, competing temperaments and textures whose oscillation itself comprises a significant portion of the narrative. It begins with instrumental recitative, containing a particularly interesting passage with the repetition of an A 27 times before transitioning into a mournful aria. The first fugue's subject arises seamlessly out of the quiet cadential lingering end to this first arioso, the poised counterpoint conveying a methodical accumulation of energy in contrast to the anguish and longing of the arioso. The end of the fugue is approached with a subtle shift to a more homophonic texture to heighten stateliness, but tragedy strikes as the dominant chord, left lingering for a considerable amount of time, functions as a German Sixth and collapses into the key of the second arioso. The music now communicates the depths of despair, as the melody is broken up, breathless, and

¹ Schiff, Andras. "Andras Schiff lecture recital: Beethoven's Piano Sonata op. 110 no. 31." Wigmore Hall, London. 20 December 2006. Lecture.

² Ibid.

gasping, the section ending with 10 lone G major chords perhaps symbolizing the tolling of a clock on one's deathbed.³ Arising out of this morbid moment, a second fugue emerges, with the original theme inverted (or turned upside down). Then, through various rather academic transformations it is able to accumulate energy, consistent with the musical direction *poi a poi di nuovo vivente* (little by little with new life). Gradually such a shift occurs, eventually accelerating into a new statement of the fugue subject in resounding bass octaves, and from here the music only soars, not subject to the restraints and failures experienced throughout the rest of the piece. Counterpoint is cast away, the rising motions find a barrier only in the limit of the keyboard's range, and the sonata ends just about as triumphantly as possible with vigor and grandeur.

Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757) was an important harpsichordist of the baroque period, writing over 500 short keyboard sonatas,⁴ with K. 380 being highly recognizable and representative among them. He held various musical positions in his life, including musical director of the Julian Chapel at St. Peter's as well as musical director of King John V of Portugal. In the latter position he also became the teacher of Princess Maria Barbara de Braganca, who would marry the prince of Spain in 1728 (Ferdinand VI), and patronize Scarlatti for the remainder of her life as he remained in their royal employ. Thus immersed in 18th century court culture, such a general sense of refinement and even opulence is perceptible in Scarlatti's music, though he is also known for capturing the essence of Spanish popular dance and hinting at the tragic.⁵ This particular Sonata K. 380 is characteristic of such dance in slow triple meter and also demonstrates lyricism and regality, the latter quality especially apparent in a repeated trumpet-call motif in fifths. The very beginning of the piece also seems to evoke birds and nature.

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953) was a Russian pianist and composer of the early 20th century who wrote in many forms, including solo piano music such as the Third Sonata op. 28. A virtuoso pianist himself, he experienced considerable compositional success in pre-revolutionary Russia where he grew up, then internationally both as a composer and touring performer. Eventually, he would return to what would be the Soviet Union in the early 1930's and remain there until his death, unfortunately suffering under state artistic censorship in the later years of his life beginning in 1948, inhibiting his hitherto forceful creative powers.⁶ This piece was from earlier years, however. It bears the subtitle "from old notebooks," having been composed over a ten-year period from 1907-1917 and therefore potentially seeming rather jumbled, though in reality being a succinct composition (also the shortest of his sonatas and only one movement). Prokofiev was wont to be bombastic, edgy, and sarcastic in his musical personality, qualities which this piece demonstrates well, though it also shows a

³ Ibid.

⁴ Kirkpatrick, Ralph. "Domenico Scarlatti." *Britannica*. Web. 11 Feb. 2021.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Taruskin, Ralph. Sergey Prokofiev. Retrieved February 26, 2021.

considerable influence of Romanticism, in some sense thus heightening the acerbity by juxtaposition. While not entirely in sonata-allegro form, the exposition shows the contrast stated above quite clearly, wherein the first bits of thematic material sport edginess and a motoric drive but give way to a highly Romantic and fanciful second theme. The sarcasm returns, however, as a jarring transition into the development section jerks the listener out of fantasy-land into a stormy anger, and the music continues in a general vein of agitated grandeur while still making room for colorful Romantic bits. The quasi-recapitulation begins with a hypnotic acceleration into the motoric momentum of the exposition, but does not continue to transition into the Romantic theme (though the theme is quoted as a barely perceptible inner voice). Rather, it steadily gains more and more in energy and harmonic anxiety, which leads to the coda *poco piu mosso* (slightly faster), a relentless push to the end of the piece which brings overt technical virtuosity to the fore and helps hammer home why this is one of the most popular 20th century piano sonatas.

Special Thanks

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Dr. Timothy Westerhaus
Dr. Colleen Hunter
Dr. Deborah Sinn
Emily Cossette

About the Performer

Henry Mauser is a Junior from Seattle, Washington majoring in music with a concentration in piano performance as well as biology at Gonzaga University. He studies the piano with Greg Presley and performs various accompanying roles for the Gonzaga Choral Ensembles, in addition to having partaken in some chamber music. In the past, he studied the piano with teachers Patrick Stephens, Careen Smith, and Joyce Gibb, conferring upon him foundational abilities fostered especially by Romantic repertoire. As a solo pianist, he seeks works of the Western tradition with technical demands supporting honored musical ideas, and with which he desires to connect to realize personal emotive impressions. Henry has played with the Spokane Symphony as part of MusicFest Northwest and has worked with pianists such as Barry Snyder in a masterclass. His interdisciplinary academic pursuits leave him with a mind open to intellectual exploration, though he intends music, which he considers a truly life-giving pursuit, to remain central to his life and to keep it as a guiding principle in his future endeavors.