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Piano

THURSDAY 21 MAY 2015

Elisabeth Murdoch Hall
7:30pm

Pre-concert talk by Caroline Almonte
6.45pm - 7.15pm
Elisabeth Murdoch Hall

–
This concert is being broadcast live on ABC Classic FM

–
DURATION: Two hours including one 20 minute interval

PROGRAM

CLAUDE DEBUSSY
(b. Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France, 1862 – d. Paris, France, 1918)

12 Préludes, Book I

I. Danseuses de Delphes
Dancers of Delphi
II. Voiles
Veils / Sails
III. Le vent dans la plaine
The Wind in the Plain
IV. 'Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir'
'The sounds and fragrances swirl through the evening air'
V. Les collines d'Anacapri
The Hills of Anacapri
VI. Des pas sur la neige
Footsteps in the Snow
VII. Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest
What the West Wind has seen
VIII. La fille aux cheveux de lin
The Girl with the Flaxen Hair
IX. La sérénade interrompue
Interrupted Serenade
X. La cathédrale engloutie
The Submerged Cathedral
XI. La Danse de Puck
Puck's Dance
XII. Minstrels

INTERVAL: 20 MINUTES

JEAN SIBELIUS
(b. Hämeenlinna, Finland, 1865 – d. Järvenpää, Finland, 1957)

Reverie, Op.58, No.1
Scherzino, Op.58, No.2
Impromptu, Op.5, No.5
Sommerlied, Op.58, No.10

ROBERT SCHUMANN
(b. Zwickau, Germany, 1810 – d. Endenich, Germany, 1856)

Piano Sonata No.1 in F-sharp minor, Op.11
Introduzione: *Un poco Adagio – Allegro vivace*
Aria
Scherzo: *Allegrissimo – intermezzo: Lento*
Finale: *Allegro, un poco maestoso*

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Claude Debussy:
***Préludes,* Book I**

Known today as the embodiment of Impressionism in music, Debussy himself was not keen on comparisons between his music and the blurry lines of Monet or Turner; his assertion 'I try to create something different – in a sense realities - and these imbeciles call it Impressionism,' clarifies his position. The statement also reflects his aspiration for musical subtleties omnipresent in his works.

Many 19th-century composers struggled with the relation between music and its worldly inspirations. The term 'absolute music' was coined around the middle of the century by Eduard Hanslick, a fervent opponent of Wagner. The term became a kind of 'quality-label' for instrumental music that managed to keep its distance from musical landscaping. Debussy's schooling took place at a time when Wagner and his programmatic ideas about music were the hottest new thing. Debussy took much from Wagner and his group – as a recipient of Prix de Rome the young Frenchman had an influential meeting with Liszt in the eternal city in 1886 – which enabled him to undergo a unique process of aesthetic evolution on foundations he thoroughly understood.

Debussy's take on musical imagery oscillated between conflicting statements he made on the issue: on the one hand, he thought it was 'more important to see a sunrise than to hear the *Pastoral Symphony,*' while on the other hand, as he wrote in a letter to the composer Edgar Varèse, he 'liked images as much as music.' In the score of the *Préludes* (1910) the individual movement titles are situated at the end of each Prelude, thus suggesting that the titles represent the images **evoked by** the music rather than an attempt **to depict** the images directly.

Despite Debussy's dislike of Impressionism as a sticker on his music, the First Prélude, *Danseuses de Delphes*, begins with as much of a musical rendition of the 'blurry line' as ever: a melody is embedded with a chordal texture, but the line is obscured by the plentitude of surrounding voices. A sculpture of three dancing Greek priestesses situated in Louvre is said to have inspired Prélude No.1. Prélude No.2, *Voiles*, develops the whole-tone motive introduced by the *Danseuses*. The ambiguous title means both 'sails' and 'veils.' Varèse claimed that the long trailing silk veils of a particular Paris dancer were the Prélude's true inspiration. The swirling *Le vent dans la plaine* concludes the

group of first three préludes, all using B-flat as a tonal centre, albeit one harmonically labile, as if the key were but a transparent façade.

The title for *Les sons et parfums tournent dans l'air du soir* is a quotation from Baudelaire's poem *Harmonie du soir*. The Prélude, now freed from the anchoring B-flat, explores a multitude of harmonic intricacies in a quasi-improvisational manner. *Les collines d'Anacapri* picks up the Mediterranean theme hinted at the First Prélude. The luminousness of B-major provides a domain for a theme echoing a popular chanson, which grows into an elated climax in this Prélude. Debussy composed the following Prélude, *Des pas sur la neige*, within a single day. The sparse texture depicts a mood of poignant solitude created by memories of a departure. The piece's natural backdrop, snow, acts as the fundamental signifier of winter and mirrors the human aspect of the picture.

The frozen landscape quickly shifts to a maelstrom of a hurricane with the *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest*, which was possibly inspired by the West Wind in H.C. Andersen's *Garden of Paradise*. Debussy's oeuvre has few true virtuoso numbers, despite the aims of the Parisian salon – the main stage of Debussy's circles – to keep up with the century-long virtuoso tradition. The turbulent tale of the West Wind is one such rarity. *La fille aux cheveux de lin* returns to a pensive, but refreshingly naïve mood, as the saturated G-flat Major hosts the most tonal of the Préludes. *La sérénade interrompue* transports the listeners to Hispania, where they can witness the frustrations of two youngsters attempting to serenade the same woman.

The legend of the submerged city of Ys, a mythical city off the coast of Brittany, is Debussy's inspiration for *La cathédrale engloutie*, the longest of the Préludes. The piece's sonic vision, columns fazed through water, is supported with a subtle rhythmic device: two independent tempos with subtle differences enhance the ancient architecture's movements. Debussy was a great admirer of Shakespeare, and he even considered setting As You Like It as an opera. *La danse de Puck*, Prélude No.11, a mixture of the fantastical and comical is an apt homage to the playwright famous for such stylistic mixtures. The final Prélude of Book I continues the 'theatre stage' thematic as a group of *Minstrels* provide music to accompany the departing audience, a convention similar to a Shakespearian staging.

Jean Sibelius: piano pieces

Jean Sibelius, known primarily as a composer of symphonic work, still felt at home in front of the keyboard. Visitors to the composer's home, the Villa Ainola, can still witness his grand piano occupying a central place in the living room. Of the more than 120 pieces Sibelius composed for the piano, most are organised as cycles, of which the Ten Piano Pieces Op.58 (1909) is the largest. The opus surfaced during an intermediary period between his enthusiastic Third and depressed Fourth Symphonies, and at a time when Sibelius was working on his String Quartet *Voces intimae*; all works of greatly different character. The rich palette of musical characters present in Op.58 may well reflect the mixed musical moods of the composer.

The opening piece, *Reverie*, unfolds like a symphonic fragment. An uninterrupted harmonic process carries the music from the first, rather obscure lines of sound, to its very last, in a quietly steady resolution. The sparse musical material of the beginning stretches into a thread spanning the entire piece – like a single line drawn from a tiny piece of gold. The pianistic sensitivities of the composer are well demonstrated by the effortless virtuosity and transparent sonorities of the *Scherzino*. The last one of the set, *Sommerlied*, opens a window into a summer day, which, however, is not simply a sunny affair. The noble verse in a *Largo* tempo begins in harmonic uncertainty. The opening phrase wanders somewhere between the territories of major and minor, but soon finds its way to the warmth of E-flat major. Summoning harmonies gradually take over and grow into an intense anthem-like manifestation before the music eventually finds its way back to the earnest dominion of the harmony from the piece's opening.

The *Impromptu* Op.5, No.5 in B minor (1893) originates from an earlier period. The composer's timely interest in Karelian folk music is demonstrated by harp-like textures harking towards the *kantele*, a traditional folk-instrument from the dulcimer family. The Impromptu is an arrangement of a scene in a melodrama *Svartsjukans nätter* (Nights of Jealousy) by Sibelius.

Robert Schumann:
Sonata in F-sharp minor, Op.11

Robert Schumann's Sonata in F-sharp minor carried a dedication: 'to Clara from Florestan and Eusebius.' The composer's muse and future wife,

at the time 16 years of age, was the daughter of Schumann's piano teacher, Friedrich Wieck. Schumann's alter egos, Florestan and Eusebius, were a reflection of his split personality, created by a conflict between his impassioned and dreamy sides. Early on, his two inner selves contributed to his creative fantasy. Later in his career, however, they started to take a creative and spiritual toll on him, and in the end, they tragically got the better of him.

In a review of the Sonata Op.11 (1836) in *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, a magazine founded by Schumann himself, the critic Ignaz Moscheles took issue with the composition's supposed dual authorship. Moscheles wrote that 'clearly, the work is a creation of one spirit' and that Schumann was simply in the habit of crediting his internal 'twin brothers,' thus gaining both a humourous tone for his writings and a motivation for applying contrasting elements in his music.

Considering the Sonata as a collaborative of its composer's tempers, it is Florestan who seems to have the upper hand in the work's brooding opening movement. The brief second movement, *Aria*, in return, gives voice to Eusebius' tender earnestness. The *Scherzo*, carrying a superlative tempo indication '*Allegrissimo*,' again acts as a playground for Florestan's fanatics. The movement's second intermezzo, titled 'alla burla ma pomposo' evoked for Moscheles an idea of music in old style. He imagined Florestan (with help of a wizard) transported into a 'ballroom of our ancestors' and joining in dancing with an 'esteemed couple wearing wigs and pannier dress.'

The Sonata climaxes with a vast finale, in which the two faces of Janus (the double-faced god of doorways in Roman mythology) join forces. The movement is a rondo, which by definition, is created by the repetition of musical material. In Schumann's hands the design unfolds as a process attempting to achieve some grand goal. The trope is laden with increasing anxiety as the opening refrain, victorious at the outset, transforms into something more terrifying in each reiteration, as if the grapes of victory became sourer during the campaign.

The Sonata Op.11, Schumann's true *magnum opus*, dates back to a time when the idea of unified Germany was gaining momentum. As the superpower of philosophy and the arts was gearing up for nation building, many artists, including Schumann, celebrated this process and brought forward their own nationalistic 'German' works. Beethoven had paved the way for the Symphony as the highest of art form and composers after him would follow suit. Consequently, Schumann paid his national dues with Symphony No.3, *Rhenish*.

By the 1830s, the sonata could be heard as another distinctly German form. When Schumann composed his first attempt, he had not yet made his mark as a composer of large piano cycles consisting of many smaller movements, which is the image we largely entertain of him today. Instead, he was figuring out his own take on the Beethovenian model of the form, which staged the work's poetic climax in its finale. With his First Sonata, Schumann accomplished this goal in a fresh way, and as Moscheles points out: 'the youngest preacher of music [Schumann] was called upon to expand the art's horizons and take it to further afield than where Beethoven himself had gone.'

Paavali Jumppanen

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Paavali Jumppanen
Piano

Finnish pianist Paavali Jumppanen's New York debut in 2001 at the 92nd Street Y, presented by Young Concert Artists, garnered reviews of 'fresh and exciting' playing and 'immense power and an extraordinary range of colors'. Paavali has since toured extensively in the U.S. performing at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC and at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, where he has performed frequently since his debut concert in 2001. His New York appearances have included performances at the Metropolitan Museum, Morgan Library and at Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall. In 2002, he made his New York concerto debut with the New York Chamber Symphony conducted by Gerard Schwarz at Alice Tully Hall.

In recent years, Paavali has dedicated much of his time to exploring music of the Viennese Classical Period. He has often performed the complete Beethoven Piano Sonatas cycle and, following one of his Beethoven recitals, the *Boston Globe* reported how 'the sheer, overflowing energy of his musicianship held one's attention throughout this impressive performance and the result was a bracing and enjoyable reminder of how path-breaking Beethoven's music was'. Paavali has recently completed a multi-year project of recording the Sonatas cycle. Part I was released in 2014 (Ondine) to critical acclaim. The remaining volumes of the recording will be released in 2015 and 2016.

Recent performances have included a rendering of the five Piano Concertos by Beethoven with the Lahti Symphony Orchestra and an Australian tour with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, performing piano quintets by Dvořák and Shostakovich. During the 2014-15 season Paavali returns to the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston to continue a two-year project focusing on works by Schumann and Stockhausen (begun in the spring of 2014). He will also perform as a soloist in the Fourth Piano Concerto of Beethoven on a national tour with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra in addition to performing recitals in Switzerland and Australia.

The year 2015 marks the anniversaries of two composers of which Paavali feels a particular attachment to – the 150th anniversary of his countryman Jean Sibelius as well as the 90th anniversary of the French composer Pierre Boulez, whose music Paavali has championed since recording the three Piano Sonatas by Boulez upon the composer's request. The two composers' music will be featured recurrently in the recital programs of Paavali during 2015.

Paavali Jumppanen was born in 1974 in Espoo, where at the age of five he began piano lessons at the Music Institute. In 1992 he entered the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, and from 1997 to 2000 studied with Krystian Zimerman at the Basel Music Academy in Switzerland. In Basel Paavali also studied the organ, fortepiano, and clavichord. Russian born pianist Konstantin Bogino has been an important mentor for Paavali throughout his studies and career.

After winning first prize at Helsinki's Maj Lind Competition in 1994, Paavali has become regular soloist of many of Finland's leading orchestras. He frequently appears with the Helsinki Philharmonic, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, and Lahti Symphony Orchestra. He has also performed extensively in Europe, Japan, and Australia, appearing with the Melbourne Symphony, Oslo Philharmonic, Stuttgart Philharmonic and the BBC Symphony Orchestra as well as appearances at numerous festivals including the Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival in Finland and the La Roque d'Anthéron Festival in France. In 2015 Paavali will begin serving as the artistic director to PianoEspoo festival, the most prominent international piano festival in his native Finland.

Paavali also frequently performs the classics of the avant-garde as well as contemporary works and regularly commissions works from Finnish composers. His recording of the complete Piano Sonatas by Pierre Boulez (DGG 2005) earned the praise of London's *Guardian*, calling it 'the best recorded disc of Boulez's piano music so far'.

For more information, please visit paavalijumppanen.com and read Paavali Jumppanen's blog.

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