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GRADUATE RECITAL, PIANO

Mary Pappert School of Music

PNC Recital Hall

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Music

Josiane Merlino

May 2012

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2012

## GRADUATE RECITAL, PIANO

Josiane Merlino

Approved May 2012

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## ABSTRACT

### GRADUATE RECITAL, PIANO

Josiane Merlino

April 1, 2012

Supervised by Dr. Stephen Benham, Ph.D.

Mozart composed his D Major Sonata, K. 311 in 1777 when he was twenty-one years old. He seemed to have hit his stride as a composer of keyboard sonatas, assimilating into this piece artistically fulfilling juxtapositions of brilliant virtuosity and subdued lyricism, humor and heartfelt expression. The first movement begins in a spirited manner, then gives way to a lyrical second theme. As the movement draws to a close in pure joy, the contrast of the pleasant and soothing second movement is all the more striking—Mozart’s niche as an opera composer proves evident by the beautiful singing melodic line. The third movement rounds out the sonata, providing yet another contrast in mood; a humorous character is implied by sudden changes in dynamics, stops and starts, and musical surprises. Mozart incorporates aspects of symphonic composition with a concerto-like lead in before the return of the theme.

Composer Nancy Galbraith provided her own program notes for her Piano Sonata No. 1. “Piano Sonata No. 1” begins with an animated *Fugue*, a restless internal dialog that twists and turns to triumphant resolve. The nearly motionless *Religioso* lingers in still, prayerful meditation, slowly arcs to an anguished ‘miserere’, then comes to rest in an emotionally spent, yet peaceful surrender. *Allegro* begins and ends in jubilant song and dance surrounding a serene, dreamy landscape.

The syncopated Fugue subject of movement I is treated in a traditional manner in the opening and is transformed into a more lyrical statement in the development. The movement closes with a dramatic statement of the subject in octaves in the low register. Movement II begins with a simple chant-like melody, which gradually becomes more intense and is finally stated with large cluster chords. The movement ends peacefully as it began. The sonata closes with a perpetual motion movement III, which makes use of minimalistic techniques.

“Jeux d’eau” by Maurice Ravel translates to “fountains,” or “water games.” Ravel composed the piece when he was a student of Gabriel Fauré, to whom the piece is dedicated. Ravel explained his piece in the following way: “*Jeux d’eau*, appearing in 1901, is at the origin of the pianistic novelties which one would notice in my work. This piece, inspired by the noise of the water and by the musical sounds which make one hear the sprays, the cascades, the brooks, is based on two motives in the manner of a sonata—without, however, subjecting itself to the classical tonal plan.” Ravel included an inscription on the top of his manuscript of a quote by Henri de Régnier from his *Cité des eaux*: “Dieu fluvial riant de l’eau qui le chatouille...” which translates to “River god laughing as the water tickles him...”

The pianist must create the illusion of waterfalls, water sprays, calm puddles, and exciting water movement. From scintillating, pianissimo arpeggios to brilliant fortissimo glissandos, Ravel utilizes the entire keyboard to evoke a myriad of water images.

Rachmaninoff was only 23 when he composed his B Minor Moment musical, Op. 16, No. 3 in 1896, but even so early in his life, he had established his compositional voice. He composed his G Minor Etude-tableau, Op. 33, No. 7 in 1911, and premiered the set later that year. The *Moment musical* possesses a dark mood, in the character of a funeral march. He coined the title, “picture etudes,” (*etudes-tableaux*) although the concept was not original; he most likely drew inspiration from the Transcendental Etudes of Liszt and the Symphonic Etudes of Schumann. Each etude suggests a picture, an extra-musical idea, in addition to a pianistic problem it presents in the tradition of the etude. He said of his inspiration, “in the process of creating music, I am greatly aided by the books or poems I have read as well as by superb paintings. I often try to express a definite idea or event in my work without referring to the direct source of the inspiration.”

Rachmaninoff did not share with his performers the imagery the pieces were meant to conjure. He stated, “I do not believe in the artist disclosing too much of his images. Let them paint for themselves what it most suggests.”

Bach’s original partita in E Major for solo violin serves as a staple in the violin repertoire, so it seems logical that Rachmaninoff heard the piece performed by his touring recital partner, violinist Fritz Kreisler. Rachmaninoff created transcriptions not only to increase his own concert repertoire, but also to serve as a preliminary exercise to foster creativity for other compositional projects. Some of his transcriptions are faithful to the original score, some contain considerable embellishments, and others use the original

score as merely a guide. In this piece, Rachmaninoff chose three of the movements of Bach's partita and crafted them beautifully for piano, remaining faithful to Bach's original intent while weaving in his own counterpoint, melodic lines, and rich, colorful harmonies. He captures the pure essence of Bach while adding just the right amount of his own compositional voice: "Rach-ing" out.



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## PROGRAM

Sonata in D Major, K. 311  
Allegro con spirito  
Andante con espressione  
Rondo: Allegro

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
(1756-1791)

Piano Sonata No. 1 (1997)  
Fugue  
Religioso  
Allegro

Nancy Galbraith  
(b. 1951)

## Intermission

Jeux d'eau

Maurice Ravel  
(1875-1937)

Moment musical in B Minor, Op. 16, No. 3  
Etude-tableau in G Minor, Op. 33, No. 7

Sergei Rachmaninoff  
(1873-1943)

Violin Partita in E Major, transcribed by Rachmaninoff  
Preludio  
Gavotte  
Gigue

Johann Sebastian Bach  
(1685-1750)