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PRESENTS

**JODI FRENCH**

Piano

Music Recital Hall

February 17, 2017

7:30 pm

**OREGON**  
**CENTER** FOR **THE ARTS**  
AT SOUTHERN OREGON UNIVERSITY

Piano Tuning by Steinway Concert Piano Technician Thomas Lowell

The Tutunov Piano Series is grateful to the Rogue Valley Symphony  
for their assistance in making this concert possible.

**2016-2017 SOU Tutunov Piano Series**

April 21, 2017: Luís Meireles and Maria José Souza Guedes

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## Biography

**Jodi French** has been playing piano since the age of three and working as a professional accompanist since age ten. Proficient at many instruments, she has always considered piano to be the most apt for sharing emotion and telling stories. Her early training was music reading at home and constant attempts to play everything she heard, making her equally comfortable at both sight-reading and playing by ear. Her favorite hobby as a child was transposing every piece she played into every possible key, a practice she still indulges in occasionally to torment friends with perfect pitch.

Her interests in recent years have expanded to include composition; she has had several sacred works published and introduces many new choral pieces each year. She studied piano performance with Dr. Alexander Tutunov at Southern Oregon University and works as staff accompanist at the university. She is the pianist and composer-in-residence for Southern Oregon Repertory Singers, principal pianist and upcoming soloist for the Rogue Valley Symphony, a pianist for Britt Festival Orchestra, and church organist.

Every piece of solo music she works on becomes her “favorite,” but none more so than the Hammerklavier sonata and her other current project, the Bach Goldberg Variations.

Favorite quote: “Inspiration exists, but it must find you working.” (Pablo Picasso)

he writes a magisterial *Adagio* movement in **Sonata form**, turning once again to a third-related key (D Major) for a secondary theme in continuous 16<sup>th</sup> notes.

Beethoven turned to **Fugue** for the final movements in several late works. He writes one of his most magnificent for this Bb sonata, “a dramatic set of variations” (Charles Rosen) with contrasting episodes based on the opening theme. He employs every device: augmentation, inversion, retrograde (backwards), a new counter-theme turning into a double fugue – and a stunningly simple and soft quarter-note *una corda* passage in D Major in the middle (another distant variant of the theme).

Virtuoso pianist and musicologist William Kinderman writes that “it was this work in particular that provoked a crisis in the reception of his music...inaccessible, too difficult, or even incomprehensible. Beethoven was fully aware that he had broken new ground with the *Hammerklavier* and succeeding works.” And what glorious works lay ahead in the 1820s: the *Missa Solemnis*, 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony, and the final sonatas and quartets.

*Program notes by Ed Wight*

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with two works titled from King Lear, or “When we call something ours, it can depart forever” from Tyutchev. He supplied no titles for today’s selections from Opus 26, however, and they strike a more pleasant, sunnier mood.

Medtner often wrote his *Skazki* in Ternary form (**A B A**), as is the case for today’s excerpts. He sets No. 1, *Allegretto frescamonte*, in a tranquil mood. The opening theme recalls the gentle Chopin lyricism of the Nocturnes. The modulation to the middle “**B**” section shifts to a more active mood. The new, repeated-note 16<sup>th</sup> melody, against triplets in the left hand, reflects Medtner’s special penchant for rhythmic complexity. The tenderness of his return to the home key and opening theme seems a breath of fresh air. Medtner opts for the “spirit of Liszt in the dazzling virtuosity” (Lawrence Budmen) of the second movement. Yet it’s a joyous outburst, climaxing with the humorous harmonic detours of the final cadences which threaten to never end.

BEETHOVEN PIANO SONATA in B-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 106  
(1818) “HAMMERKLAVIER”

Though Beethoven used the German term for the piano – *Hammerklavier* – for several late sonatas, he insisted on this title in the initial advertisements for the massive B-flat Sonata, Op. 106, and the nickname stuck. Beethoven returned to the 4-movement sonata cycle for the first time in sixteen years (since Op. 31 no. 3 in E-flat Major) and wrote the longest and most complex sonata of his career.

The opening two phrases of the **Sonata-form** first movement provide a microcosm for the extreme dramatic contrasts of the entire work. He immediately juxtaposes the dense, pounding, fortissimo 3-octave chords with a soft and gently lyrical response. Beethoven chooses G Major for his lyrical secondary theme, also heralding the entire work: in every movement, the secondary keys establish relationships by thirds. Beethoven pushes the revolutionary envelope even further by seeming to open the recap in B Major.

He writes a brief, lyrical, and comparatively light-hearted **Scherzo and Trio**. However, the sudden eruption in the short transition back from the B-flat Minor Trio - with its presto tempo, shift to 2/4 meter, cadenza, and 3-beats of pounding chords followed by a pause at the end – must have seemed incomprehensible. Beethoven then turns to the longest slow movement of his career. In F-sharp minor,

**Program**

Chaconne in G Major, HWV 435	G. F. Handel (1685 – 1759)
SKAZKI (“Fairy Tales”), Op. 26 No. 1, Allegretto frescamonte No. 2, Molto vivace	N. Medtner (1880 – 1951)
Sonata in G Major, Hob XVI: 27 <i>Allegro con Brio</i> <i>Menuetto</i> <i>Finale. Presto</i>	F. J. Haydn (1732 – 1809)

Intermission

Sonata in B-flat Major, Op. 106 “Hammerklavier”	L. V. Beethoven (1770 – 1827)
<i>Allegro</i> <i>Scherzo: Assai vivace</i> <i>Adagio sostenuto</i> <i>Introduzione: Largo...Allegro – Fuga: Allegro risoluto</i>	

*Ars longa vita brevis*

## Program Notes by Ed Wight

### HANDEL CHACONNE in G MAJOR, HWV 435 (c. 1733)

In a career dominated by vocal works (operas and oratorios), Handel also found time for a substantial amount of instrumental music. He wrote orchestral suites and sinfonias, 40 concertos, 19 sonatas, 24 harpsichord suites and a host of individual movements for keyboard. Handel wrote nine chaconne movements for harpsichord; three of them appear in multi-movement suites, and the six remaining ones appear as independent, single-movement works (including tonight's Chaconne in G Major). The late Baroque era in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century represented the high-water mark for this popular variation format. And unlike the variation genres of the later Classical period (which focused on thematic variation), the chaconne and the passacaglia - its equally popular companion – offer a harmonic pattern as the unifying element.

History provides no clear distinction between pieces titled either chaconne or passacaglia. Chaconnes tend to be a bit faster and in the major mode, seemingly confirmed by this G Major chaconne. But Handel loved the variation form, and often undermines this modal distinction. He writes all three of his chaconnes embedded within suites in the minor mode. Tonight's elegant set of 21 variations on an 8-bar phrase opens with eight variations in G Major, during which Handel offers a gradual acceleration from 8<sup>th</sup> notes to triplets, and finally to 16<sup>th</sup>-note figurations. But a dramatic shift to *Adagio* tempo in Variation 9 dramatizes Handel's penchant for the minor mode. He remains in G Minor for eight variations, also creating a gradual acceleration towards constant 16<sup>th</sup> notes. The final climax begins with the return of the major mode in Variation 17. Handel's 16<sup>th</sup>-note patterns accelerate from complete bars to single beats by Variation 19, and then to both hands simultaneously in this delightful and dramatic chaconne movement.

### HAYDN PIANO SONATA in G MAJOR, Hob XVI: 27 (c.1776)

Haydn scholar and keyboard specialist A. Peter Brown wrote that it's time to revise our estimate of Haydn's keyboard music. "The instrument and its music had a compelling place in his life. Haydn performed on the instrument with precision and an uncommon expression..." And Brown is not alone. The late piano virtuoso and musicologist Charles Rosen wrote that "Haydn's late piano trios are,

with the concertos of Mozart, the most brilliant piano works before Beethoven."

Haydn wrote some sixty keyboard sonatas between 1755 – 1795. While he set most of them in three movements, there are a handful of 2-movement sonatas (as in Beethoven). Haydn intended many of his sonatas for harpsichord, including tonight's G Major Sonata – approximately his 40<sup>th</sup> of the sixty - published in 1776. He started writing definitely for the fortepiano (the direct predecessor of the modern piano) only after 1780.

This sonata is a delight, with several unusual features – including all three movements in the same key. The *Allegro con brio* opening movement in **Sonata form** maintains lively keyboard figuration throughout. From the secondary theme on, he employs frequent *Alberti-bass* passagework for the left hand. This is also one of Haydn's last sonatas with a **Minuet and Trio**. In a rare gesture at this point in his career, he sets the trio in minor. The closing **Theme and Variations** movement stays with the 24-bar structure of the theme (8 plus 16) until the volatile, unpredictable passage in minor. As usual, Haydn has his fun, with order and the return of G Major finally being established.

### MEDTNER 4 SKAZKI ("Folk Tales"), Op. 26 (1912): Excerpts

Russian composer and virtuoso pianist Nicolas Medtner was a contemporary of Sergei Rachmaninov in both chronology and temperament. Both of them favored a late-Romantic idiom in their 20<sup>th</sup>-century compositions, and both left Russia soon after the Revolution. Known as a fastidious craftsman 'who composed more with the eraser than the pencil' his large-scale structures were particularly successful - three piano concertos, three violin sonatas, and a piano quintet. His fourteen piano sonatas constitute "a cycle to be set alongside those of Skryabin and Prokofiev as the most important Russian works in the genre" (2001 New Grove Dictionary). Yet he also established himself as a gifted miniaturist, writing 106 songs and 38 *Skazki* ('Folk tales') for piano throughout his career.

These short movements harken back to the great character pieces of Schubert, Chopin, Brahms, and especially Schumann in giving half of them explicit titles or quotes from Shakespeare, Russian poets, or Russian folk tales. Some reflect the vaunted Russian pessimism,