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PRESENTS

ANDREY PONOICHEVNY

Piano

Music Recital Hall

November 17th, 2017

7:30 pm

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

Biography

Andrey Ponochevny's career has encompassed the globe as a preeminent talent among performing artists today. Ponochevny graduated from Belarussian Academy of Music where he received his Bachelor and Master degrees. He also holds the Artist Diploma from Texas Christian University in Fort Worth where he studied with Tamás Ungár as well as the Artist Certificate from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, having studied with renowned pianist Joaquín Achúcarro. Among his numerous awards, he was twice named "Outstanding Artist in China" (2009 and 2011) in addition to having been given the positions of "Honorable Professor" of Jilin College of Arts (China) and "Visiting Professor" at the Beihua University (China). In his hometown of Minsk (Belarus), he was awarded the title "Minskovite of the year" in 2002. As a reflection of his extensive competition achievements, he was honored as the featured pianist at the General Assembly of the World Federation of International Music Competitions in Washington, DC. In the concert hall, Ponochevny has garnered equal success, having performed extensively in North America, Europe, and Asia. As the Bronze Medal Winner of the 2002 International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, Ponochevny has proven success in competition. Ponochevny currently serves on the teaching faculty of University of Dallas.

The generosity of eight committed, music-loving couples launched the SOU Tutunov Piano Series. Join them and help sustain its artistic excellence.

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school that may be said to have produced some of their country's finest music" (musicologist Robin Golding). The leading composers were Mussorgsky, Balakirev, Borodin - and Tchaikovsky, who wrote over 100 songs. In 1883 he finished a set of sixteen Children's Songs, Op. 54, most of them set to texts by Alexey Plescheyev. Like his Children's Album, Op. 39 for piano, these songs also "reflect his spontaneous love of children" (Golding). Tchaikovsky creates a primarily gentle, harmonically rich setting. But perhaps only the Russians could write a calming lullaby - in the minor mode! Pianist Arcadi Volodos wrote the transcription, adding the light virtuoso passagework.

RACHMANINOFF

SONATA for CELLO and PIANO in G MINOR, Op. 19 (1901)

After the disastrous premier of his first symphony in 1897 (due primarily to a bad performance), Rachmaninoff experienced a writer's block that lasted three years. The major works with which he finally broke through it in 1901 were the glorious Piano Concerto No. 2, Op 18 and the Cello Sonata in G Minor, Op. 19. The cello sonata, written right after the concerto, shares its rich harmonic language, melodic breadth and virtuoso piano style. Yet despite being a great concert pianist, Rachmaninoff strove to give both the cello and piano parts equal prominence. He dedicated it to his friend, cellist Anatoly Brandukov, and they gave the premier performance in December 1901.

Writing about the sonata for Carnegie Hall, critic Harry Haskell says that "while the Andante is the shortest of the four movements, it contains some of Rachmaninoff's most tender and rapturously lyrical music." Rachmaninoff sets it in A B A form, opening and closing with a lovely, tender theme of great harmonic warmth, which frames a more active middle section. And with this sonata, Rachmaninoff closed one door but opened another. "It is his best piece of chamber music" (Haskell) but also his last. Yet it also "filled a gap in the literature" (critic Laurie Shulman), becoming the first Russian cello sonata to enter the standard repertory. Arcadi Volodos once again provides the piano transcription.

LISZT

HUNGARIAN RHAPSODY No. 15 "RAKOCZY MARCH" (1853)

This march was written as a tribute to Prince Ferenc Rakoczi II (1676-1735), who led Hungary in a revolt against the Hapsburg Empire. Its origins remain unknown, though some sources credit the prince's court violinist Michael Barna with the composition. While different versions of this popular march exist throughout Europe, Liszt wrote the most popular of them all in 1853. He intended it "as a statement of national affiliation" (pianist and Liszt scholar Leslie Howard), presenting it as a virtuoso show-piece to close his fifteen Hungarian Rhapsodies for piano. Thirty years later, Liszt added more rhapsodies to the collection in the years just before his death in 1886. This transcription by Vladimir Horowitz draws on the versions of both Berlioz and Liszt.

Program notes by Ed Wight

told by a river bank (easily discernible in the continuous rippling currents of the left hand" (Lebovitch).

The set of Op. 26 pieces appeared in 1912, with no titles. Pianist Hamish Milne describes the opening and closing sections of Op. 26 No. 3 in F Minor as a "gentle, melancholic soliloquy" – yet enlivened by a remarkable waltz-like burst into truly 'surprising harmony' in the "B" section. After three Skazki in minor, the last two selections finally turn to the sunnier sounds of E-flat Major. The tranquility of Op. 26 No.1 recalls the gentle lyricism of the Chopin nocturnes. Medtner wrote that the joyous outbursts in Op. 26 No. 2 seemingly evoke "the spirit of Liszt in the dazzling virtuosity" and brings the set to a lively close.

SCRIABIN

PIANO SONATA No. 4 IN F-sharp MAJOR, OP. 30 (1903)

While the piano sonatas of Scriabin, Prokofiev and Medtner may provide 'the most important Russian contributions in the genre,' Scriabin's importance also transcends national considerations. His long cycle of ten sonatas "is arguably of the most consistent high quality since Beethoven" (New Grove). Sonata No. 4 of 1903 is the shortest – two movements lasting about nine minutes. It also finds Scriabin in transition both in musical style (moving away from the influence of Chopin and Liszt) and his personal life. He resigned his teaching position at the Moscow Conservatory, began immersing himself in philosophy and Greek myth, and soon left Moscow for Switzerland and Paris. Scriabin also wrote a program for tonight's fourth sonata (describing a flight to a distant star), and the complex harmony – while still tonal – heralds his later abandonment of the prolonged influence of tonal centers.

He set both movements in F-sharp Major, and the gentle, restrained opening Andante movement bears a striking resemblance in theme, harmony and texture to Wagner's celebrated Prelude to Tristan und Isolde. Scriabin provides two main ideas; an upward-leaping motive which opens the movement (and ultimately dominates the proceedings), and a rising, chromatic, linear motive. The lively Prestissimo volando which follows, set in Sonata form, proceeds without pause from the opening movement. He closes with a coda that draws upon the first movement's main theme now returning in triumph, energized by a fortissimo chordal accompaniment in triplet figuration.

TCHAIKOVSKY

CHILDREN'S SONGS, OP. 54: No. 10, LULLABY IN A STORM (1883)

"Russia's contribution to European song during the second half of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th is of considerable importance and interest. With little or no tradition of their own...[composers] quickly evolved a national

Program

Four Piano Sonatas

Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757)

d minor (K213)

e minor (K198)

C Major (K487)

A Major (K24)

Sonata No. 32 in c minor, Op 111 Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Maestoso. Allegro con brio ed appassionato

Arietta. Adagio molto semplice e cantabile

Intermission

Five Fairy Tales

Nikolai Medtner (1880-1951)

a minor, Op. 51, No.2

e minor, Op. 34, No.2

f minor, Op. 26, No. 3

E - flat Major, Op. 26, No. 2

B - flat Major, Op. 20, No. 1

Sonata No. 4 in F sharp Major, Op. 30 Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915)

Andante. Prestissimo volando

Lullaby in a Storm Op. 54, No. 10 Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

(piano transcription by Arcadi Volodos)

Andante from Sonata for Cello and Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873 –1943)

Piano in G Minor, Op. 19 (piano transcription by Arcadi Volodos)

Hungarian Rhapsody No. 15 "Rakoczy March" Franz Liszt (1873-1943)

(piano transcription by Vladimir Horowitz)

SCARLATTI

FOUR SONATAS

Born in 1685, Domenico Scarlatti shares the same year of birth as J.S. Bach and Handel. And like Bach - in such late works as the Goldberg Variations - Scarlatti wrote some of the most challenging harpsichord music of the 18th century. The son of celebrated opera composer Alessandro Scarlatti, Domenico's keyboard prowess ultimately led him to Lisbon in 1723. Princess Maria Barbara (later Queen of Spain) was his most gifted pupil, and he wrote many of his 550 single-movement keyboard sonatas for her. Scarlatti "wrote pieces that showcased experimental effects, such as hand-crossings, rapid repetitions of notes, octaves, wide leaps, double trills...and other virtuoso techniques" (Carnegie Hall critic ToniMarie Marchioni). They also captured much of the spirit of popular music in mid-18th century Spain. Sonata historian William Newman writes that Scarlatti holds "a secure niche in music history - along with Frescobaldi, Chopin, and remarkably few others - as one of the most genuine, poetic, and original creators for the keyboard."

Scarlatti wrote his single-movement sonatas in binary form, drawing on elements from both the late Baroque and early Classical eras. Each sonata tonight offers different aspects of his keyboard style. The concert opens with K 213 in D minor - an unusual work for Scarlatti. It is an introspective Andante movement from a composer who wrote comparatively few slow sonatas. In contrast, Scarlatti creates a quick perpetuum mobile for the E Minor Sonata K 198, with continual cascading passagework. K 24 in A Major is more of an improvisatory fantasia than a sonata, with the widest range of figuration of all these four sonatas. The set closes in quick and lighthearted fashion with K 587 in C Major. Its 3/8 meter features long, balanced phrases permeated by ornaments, as well as some delightful harmonic surprises.

BEETHOVEN

PIANO SONATA in C MINOR, Op. 111 (1822)

Beethoven's late sonatas "made few concessions to the listener. It took almost a century for the last sonatas...to [become] respectable concert pieces" writes musicologist Charles Rosen. And Op. 111 provides a compendium of many of those remarkable late-style procedures. He supplanted the flowing four and eight-bar lyricism of his earlier works in favor of the brief one and two-bar motives of his primary theme; frequent tempo changes; continuous streams of linear 16th-note counterpoint; and the fugal procedures of his late style. The technical difficulty of the extraordinary five, six, nine, and 12-note arabesque figuration in the secondary theme and recap anticipate Chopin. Dramatic five-octave leaps between consecutive pitches - reinforced by expressive accents - take the first movement of this piano sonata into realms undreamed of by his gifted 18th-century predecessors. Furthermore, the secondary keys in his Sonata-form expositions had long since extended beyond earlier composers. Here he chose the flat 6th pitch (A-flat major) instead of the relative major (E-

flat) found in Haydn and Mozart's era.

Despite the traditional separation between movements, Beethoven nonetheless forges a link between them. After the fiery passion throughout the first movement, it closes with a surprisingly gentle coda in C Major that heralds both the key and mood of the Theme and Variations finale. He at first appears to continue the traditional 18th-century approach of increasing the rhythmic complexity with each variation of the 16-bar theme. Yet typical of his late-period "revitalization of the variation genre" (musicologist Elaine Sisman), Beethoven sets each consecutive variation in a different meter (9/16, 6/16, 12/32, and 9/16 again) - unprecedented in earlier eras. By the end of the movement, he writes simultaneous 32nd-note passages four octaves apart before dissolving into trills. Such passages of wide spacing between hands, coupled with the repetitiveness of the variation genre and the gentleness throughout this Arietta finale, results in one of the most extraordinarily meditative movements he ever attempted. Pianist and musicologist William Kinderman writes that Beethoven creates "sustained trills and ethereal textures that music had never known before."

MEDTNER

SKASKI "FAIRY TALES"

The almost all-Russian second half of the concert begins with Nikolai Medtner, "who may be the most significant composer-pianist you've never heard of" writes critic Michael Lebovitch. "As one of the very last Romantic composer-pianists, Medtner earned a place in Russian music alongside his close contemporaries Scriabin and Rachmaninoff" (2001 New Grove Dictionary). He wrote large-scale works (three concertos, three violin sonatas and a piano quintet), and his 14 piano sonatas constitute "a cycle to be set alongside Scriabin and Prokofiev as the most important Russian works in the genre" (New Grove). Yet in addition to these works, Medtner also established a career as a gifted miniaturist. He wrote 106 songs, and also 38 Skaski ('Folk Tales') for piano, recalling the great character pieces of Schubert, Chopin, Brahms, and especially Schumann. Medtner usually set them in A B A form. Yet despite the small dimensions, he treated the genre seriously - creating a 'pervasive, dazzling virtuosity' never stinting on his legendary craftsmanship. "The writing is dense and chromatic, with complex cross-rhythms, syncopations, inner voices, and surprising turns in harmony" (Lebovitch).

He often employs titles, and the opening tale (Op 51 No. 2) depicts "Cinderella." Medtner sets the gentle Cantabile introduction and main theme in minor, befitting her early misfortune. The "B" section is in the brighter A Major as her fortunes improve and she attends the Ball, but the minor mode and opening theme return at the end. Medtner told friends that Op. 34 No. 2 depicts "a tale