

Ilya Yakushev, Piano

Program, Hemet Community Concert Association

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)
Sonata in D major, Hob.XVI/37
Allegro con brio
Largo e sostenuto
Finale: Presto ma non troppo

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)
Nocturne in C sharp minor

Ludwig van Beethoven
Sonata in F minor, Op. 57 ("Appassionata")
Allegro assai
Andante con moto
Allegro ma non troppo; Presto

Intermission

Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881)
Pictures at an Exhibition
1. Promenade
2. Gnomus (The Gnome)
3. Promenade
4. Il vecchio castello (The Old Castle)
5. Promenade
6. Tuileries (Dispute d'enfants après jeux) (Tuileries [Quarrel between Children after Playing])
7. Bydlo (Cattle)
8. Promenade
9. Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks
10. Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle
11. Promenade
12. Limoges, le marché (La grande nouvelle) (The Marketplace at Limoges [The Great News])
13. Catacombae, sepulchrum romanum (Catacombs, Roman sepulcher)
14. Con mortuis in lingua mortua (With the Dead in a Dead Language)
15. The Hut on Hen's Legs
16. The Great Gate of Kiev

Ilya Yakushev appears by arrangement with Lisa Sapinkopf Artists, www.chambermuse.com

ILYA YAKUSHEV

Russian pianist Ilya Yakushev, with many awards and honors to his credit, continues to astound and mesmerize audiences at major venues on three continents.

In the 2017-18 season, Ilya Yakushev appeared as piano soloist with Millikin-Decatur Symphony, Las Cruces Symphony, Edmonton Symphony, Reading Symphony, Johnstown Symphony, and St. Petersburg Philharmonic, in addition to recitals in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Vermont, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Louisiana.

Highlights of Yakushev's 2018-19 season include return appearances with Edmonton Symphony, Cheyenne Symphony, Zacatecas Symphony, and Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra. He also played over 40 recitals in the US and Europe.

In 2014, the British label Nimbus Records released Yakushev's CD, "Prokofiev Sonatas Vol. 1" CD. The American Record Guide wrote, "Yakushev is one of the very best young pianists before the public today, and it doesn't seem to matter what repertoire he plays – it is all of the highest caliber." Volume 2 was published in 2017, as was an all-Russian CD.

In past seasons, he has performed in various prestigious venues worldwide, including Glinka Philharmonic Hall (St. Petersburg), Victoria Hall (Singapore), Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall (New York), Davies Symphony Hall (San Francisco), and Sejong Performing Arts Center (Seoul, Korea). His performances with orchestra include those with the Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, BBC Concert Orchestra, Boston Pops, Rochester Philharmonic, Utah Symphony, and many others.

Winner of the 2005 World Piano Competition which took place in Cincinnati, OH, Mr. Yakushev received his first award at age 12 as a prizewinner of the Young Artists Concerto Competition in his native St. Petersburg. In 1997, he received the Mayor of St. Petersburg's Young Talents award, and in both 1997 and 1998, he won First Prize at the Donostia Hiria International Piano Competition in San Sebastian, Spain. In 1998, he received a national honor, The Award for Excellence in Performance, presented to him by the Minister of Culture of the Russian Federation in Moscow. Most recently, Mr. Yakushev became a recipient of the prestigious Gawon International Music Society's Award in Seoul, Korea.

Mr. Yakushev attended the Rimsky-Korsakov College of Music in his native St. Petersburg, Russia, and subsequently came to New York City to attend Mannes College of Music, where he studied with legendary pianist Vladimir Feltsman.

A sampling of critical praise for Mr. Yakushev includes:

In Familiar Music, a Pianist Shows What He Can Do [HEADLINE]: Mr. Yakushev can do just about anything he wants . . . superb." —New York Times

"Yakushev was little short of heroic." —New York Times

One of the Top 10 Classical Music Events of the Year:

“The young Russian pianist made an astounding triple debut as part of the [San Francisco] Symphony's Prokofiev Festival, playing the First Concerto, the Fourth Concerto *and* the Seventh Sonata with vigor and virtuosity.” —San Francisco Chronicle

He is a Yamaha artist.

PROGRAM NOTES

HAYDN:

One of Haydn's few early sonatas to have entered the popular repertoire is the D major, No 37, from the set of six published by the Viennese firm of Artaria in 1780. The sonatas were dedicated to the talented sisters Franziska and Maria Katherina von Auenbrugger, whose playing in aristocratic salons drew the admiration of both Leopold Mozart—never one to dish out compliments lightly—and Haydn himself.

The D major's popularity is easy to understand. The first movement, with its irrepressible, chirruping main theme, evokes the spirit of Domenico Scarlatti at his most dashing within the dynamic of the Classical sonata style. At the center of the development Haydn offsets the prevailing mood of jocularly with a powerful sequence of suspensions. The Largo e sostenuto, in D minor, is especially striking: a grave, sonorously scored sarabande, archaic in flavour, with a suggestion of a Baroque French overture in its dotted rhythms and imitative contrapuntal textures. Like the slow movement of No 24, it leads without a break into the finale, a guileless rondo marked *innocentemente* and built around a fetching tune that could have been whistled on any Viennese street corner.
—From notes by Richard Wigmore © 2007

BEETHOVEN:

The "Appassionata" sonata is so demanding of both performer and instrument, so novel of structure that it was virtually incomprehensible at first, and, reportedly, went unplayed in public until more than three decades after Beethoven's death.

Maynard Solomon writes the following about the Opus 57 in his biography of Beethoven:

Beethoven moved irrevocably beyond the boundaries of the high-Classical piano style, creating sonorities and textures never previously achieved. He no longer limited the technical difficulties of his sonatas to permit performance by competent amateurs, but instead stretched the potentialities of both instrument and technique to their outer limits. The dynamics are greatly extended; the colors are fantastic and luxuriant, approaching quasi-orchestral sonorities.

Beethoven was said to have once been asked to explain the meaning of the Sonata in D Minor, Op.31 no.2 and the *Appassionata* Sonata. His reply? "Read Shakespeare's *Tempest*."

CHOPIN:

Frédéric Chopin's 21 Nocturnes, composed between 1827 and 1846, offer a rich array of depth and emotion for both the pianist and listener. The genre was

developed by the Irish composer John Field, but Chopin expanded on this original conception, producing what are generally considered to be among the finest short pieces ever written for the instrument. The Nocturne is typically characterized by a romantic, dreamy character suggestive of the night. The main feature of most Nocturnes is a beautiful song-like melody, often with melancholic overtones accompanied by a rolling unobtrusive bass. Ornamental passages and filigree in the melody are common, and the importance of the sustaining pedal cannot be overestimated. While there are variations on this idea, the formula has produced some of the most haunting, emotional and beautiful piano music.

Chopin dedicated the C-sharp minor Nocturne work to his older sister with the statement: "To my sister Ludwika as an exercise before beginning the study of my second Concerto." First published 21 years after the composer's death, the piece is sometimes called *Reminiscence*.

The piece was played by Holocaust survivor Natalia Karp for the Nazi concentration camp commandant Amon Goeth, who was so impressed with the rendition that he spared Karp's life.

MUSSORGSKY:

Modeste Mussorgsky produced his *Pictures at an Exhibition* to perpetuate the memory of a friend. In the process, he created a monument far more massive and lasting than his subject.

Mussorgsky was an ardent Russian nationalist, but he was far more interested in folk art than in the grandiose ornamental designs of the aristocracy. Mussorgsky's career began in the military, but he resigned from the life of a fastidious officer to study music and supported himself as a civil servant.

Yet, his soul was far less complacent than one would expect from a life-long bureaucrat—he lived in a commune and the radical ideology he absorbed there infused his music, as he devoted himself to seeking truth in art by crafting a natural style without classical artifice.

Victor Hartmann was a close friend who shared Mussorgsky's ideals in his own field of architecture and painting. When Hartmann died in 1874, aged only 39, Mussorgsky was devastated. In abject bitterness, he wrote: "Why should a dog, a horse, a rat live on and creatures like Hartmann must die?" But soon his incomprehension took a more constructive tack. The following year saw a memorial exhibit of 400 Hartmann works, including sketches, watercolors and costume designs produced mostly during the artist's travels abroad. Locales include Poland, France and Italy; the final movement depicts an architectural design for the capital city of Ukraine. Mussorgsky was deeply moved. Seized with inspiration, he quickly reacted to the exhibition by writing a suite of ten piano pieces dedicated to the organizer.

The work opens with a brilliant touch—a “promenade” theme that reemerges throughout as a transition amid the changing moods of the various pictures. By alternating 6/4 and 5/4 time, its regular metric “walking” pace is thrown off-balance and cleverly suggests the hesitant gait of an art-lover strolling through a museum, attracted by upcoming pleasures but hesitant to leave the object at hand without a final glance at a telling detail.

The ten pictures Mussorgsky depicts are a gnome-shaped nutcracker; a troubadour plaintively singing outside an ancient castle; children vigorously playing and quarrelling in a park; a lumbering wooden Polish ox-cart; a ballet of peeping chicks as they hatch from their shells; an argument between two Warsaw Jews, one haughty and vain, the other poor and garrulous; shrill women and vendors in a crowded marketplace; the eerie, echoing gloom of catacombs beneath Paris; the hut of a grotesque bone-chomping witch of Russian folk-lore; and a design for an entrance gate to Kiev. Mussorgsky clearly chose these subjects for the variety of moods they invoked and the opportunities they presented for a wide array of musical depictions.

Alcoholism and severe depression not only cut short Mussorgsky's life but plagued his most creative years and prevented him from advocating his work, which succumbed to the dismissive attitude of the cultural gatekeepers. Fame came only after his early death at age 42, when well-meaning admirers indulgently undertook to edit his operas in order to correct what they perceived to be artistic flaws. Only in more recent times have the originals been revived to display their frank elemental power.

The Pictures at an Exhibition met a similar fate. The score remained unpublished until 1886, five years after Mussorgsky's death. But then, almost immediately, an amazing phenomenon began—while the original version generated little interest among pianists, over two dozen composers were seized by a compulsion to orchestrate it, the most famous of which was Maurice Ravel.

And what about the piano version that started it all? Although there had been others, it was a recording of an extraordinary recital in Sofia, Bulgaria by Sviatoslav Richter in 1958 that refocused public attention on the original. This recording fully vindicated Mussorgsky's work as a masterpiece in its own right, without need of translation, embellishment or improvement. Hartmann would have been proud of his friend's work! —Peter Gutmann