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## Student Recital: Robert Cole, piano

Department of Music, University of Richmond

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Robert Cole, piano



FEBRUARY 18, 2007, 3:00 PM  
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## PROGRAM

- Das Wohltemperierte Clavier, Buch I*      Johann Sebastian Bach  
Prelude and Fugue in B-flat Minor      (1685-1750)
- Sonata Op. 81a in E-flat Major      Ludwig van Beethoven  
I. Das Lebewohl: Adagio-Allegro      (1770-1827)  
II. Abwesenheit: Andante espressiv  
(Im gehender Bewegung, doch mit viel Ausdruck)  
III. Das Wiedersehen: Vivacissimamente  
(Im lebhaftesten Zeitmaße)

## INTERMISSION

- Sechs Kleine Klavierstücke, Op. 19*      Arnold Schoenberg  
1. Leicht, zart      (1874-1951)  
2. Langsam  
3. Sehr langsam  
4. Rasch, aber leicht  
5. Etwas rasch  
6. Sehr langsam
- Preludes      Alexander Scriabin  
Op. 74, No. 3 (1914)      (1872-1915)  
Op. 13, No. 3 in G major (1895)  
Op. 11, No. 14 in E-flat minor (1895)
- Estampes*      Claude Debussy  
Pagodes      (1862-1918)  
Soirée dans Grenade  
Jardins sous la pluie

## NOTES

Originally published in 1722, Bach's *Das Wohltemperierte Clavier* was one of the earliest compositions to make use of all twenty-four major and minor keys. It also represented a profoundly influential development in harmonic and contrapuntal complexity, later inspiring many composers, including such diverse figures as Mozart and Shostakovich, to pay homage to *Das Wohltemperierte Clavier* in their own works.

The B-flat minor Prelude from Book One uses a rhythmic motif and several alto contrapuntal figures to establish a calm character that is gradually agitated into a chromatic climax before ending as contemplatively as it began. One of only two five-voice fugues included in *Das Wohltemperierte Clavier* (the other being the Book One Fugue in C-sharp minor), the Fugue in B-flat minor is unique in its dramatic stretto construction. As the fugue progresses, the entrances of the voices grow closer together, a process that culminates in the grand stretto of the last nine bars, when all five voices enter atop each other in quick succession. This rich polyphonic texture ultimately resolves itself in the piece's final cadence.

Bach only rarely composed in the key of B-flat minor, as he associated it with suffering, particularly with that of Christ. In fact, the final utterance of Christ in *St. Matthew's Passion*, "Father, father, why hast thou forsaken me," is heard in B-flat minor. In this fugue, Bach underscores the tragic nature of the key by also including within the theme an unusually large melodic leap, the interval of a ninth. This work, with its coordinated combination of melodic gesture and structural form, is a particularly noteworthy example of Bach's ability to achieve great emotional depth in *Das Wohltemperierte Clavier*.



Beethoven's twenty-sixth sonata, published in 1810, is unusual among Beethoven's works in that he composed it and titled it with a specific programmatic significance in mind. The sonata commemorates the departure, absence, and return of his patron Archduke Rudolph of Vienna, who was forced to flee during Napoleon's attack on the city in 1809. The piece is often referred to as *Les Adieux*, which is the French translation of Beethoven's preferred title, *Das Lebewohl*. This sonata is generally recognized as one of the final pieces from the middle period of Beethoven's compositional development, along with such pieces as the Op. 53 and Op. 57 piano sonatas (*Waldstein* and *Appassionata*, respectively), the fifth piano concerto (*Emperor*), and the sixth symphony (*Pastoral*).

The first three notes of the piece (G-F-Eb) define the farewell motif that is developed over the course of the opening movement (*Das Lebewohl* or *The Parting*). A brief adagio introduction gives way to the allegro movement, which, even with its economical use of melodic material, manages to explore the complicated feelings surrounding the piece's thematic significance. The second movement, entitled *Abwesenheit* or *Absence*, leads directly into the lively closing movement (*Das Wiedersehen* or *The Reunion*), an enthusiastically virtuosic finale.



These brief pieces are representative of Schoenberg's early atonal compositional style. The first five were composed during a single day in 1911, and the final piece was inspired a year later by the bells that sounded during Gustav Mahler's funeral ceremony.

Schoenberg was among the first Austrian composers whose careers began as the Romanticist movement reached the end of its long development. Wagner, Mahler, and Richard Strauss had pushed traditional tonality to its very limits, with Wagner's operas and Mahler's symphonies representing the apotheosis of the Romanticist aesthetic as translated into music. As such, Schoenberg was one of the founding members of a modernist "tradition" that recognized

the exhausted possibilities of Romanticism and sought to create new forms of musical expression. Along with the Op. 16 *Fünf Orchesterstücke* (1909), the Op. 19 pieces comprise Schoenberg's earliest attempts to define a new musical idiom, which he described in a 1909 letter to Ferruccio Busoni:

My goal: complete liberation from form and symbols, context  
and logic.

Away with motivic work!

Away with harmony as the cement of my architecture!

Harmony is expression and nothing more.

Away with pathos!

Away with 24-pound protracted scores!

My music must be short.

With a total duration of approximately five minutes, each piece is a study in rapid characterization, leaving no room for development or sentimentality.



Among Scriabin's most important works were his sets of preludes and etudes for the piano. His earliest piano miniatures were heavily influenced by Chopin and Liszt, but his style evolved considerably over his brief career, as his latest works approached atonality.

The selected preludes outline Scriabin's musical trajectory, including two early preludes that clearly reflect the lingering influences of Romanticism, and ending with a late prelude that has no definable tonal center, creating its effect through rhythmic motif and harmonic color rather than through melodic development.



Whereas many German and Austrian composers were somewhat hesitant to assign a deliberate programmatic meaning to their works, a long tradition of composing pieces to evoke specific scenes or images existed among French composers. Debussy's *Estampes* is a notable product of this tradition.

Published in 1903, *Estampes* draws upon images from various aspects of contemporary French culture as it described three distinct scenes. The first piece, *Pagodes (Pagodas)*, reflects the “orientalist” aesthetic that had swept the French artistic and fashion scenes at the turn of the century. To develop an aural representation of this enthusiasm for all things Asian, Debussy drew inspiration from the sound of Javanese gamelan music and made extensive use of the pentatonic scale. *Soirée dans Grenade (Evening in Granada)* describes a Spanish scene as it adopts the rhythm of an *habanera* and the Moorish harmony of the music of southern Spain. The final piece, *Jardins sous la pluie (Gardens in the Rain)*, borrows melodic material from two French children’s songs as it evokes the sound and feeling of a summer thunderstorm from a child’s perspective.