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Paul Hanson, piano

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THE UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC
Presents

Paul Hanson
Piano

Sunday, September 30, 2007
3:00 p.m.
Camp Concert Hall,
Booker Hall of Music



PAUL HANSON, PIANIST

Piano Piece Op. 33a (1929)
Piano Piece Op. 33b (1931)

Arnold Schoenberg
(1874-1951)

Night Fantasies (1980)

Elliott Carter
(b. 1908)

INTERMISSION

La lugubre gondola No. 2 (1885)
(The Funeral Gondola)

Franz Liszt
(1811-1886)

Nuages gris (1881)
(Grey Clouds)

En rêve (1885)
(In a Dream)

Schlaflos! Frage und Antwort (1883)
(Sleepless! Question and Answer)

From *Années de Pèlerinage Troisième année*
(Years of Pilgrimage Book III)

Aux cyprès de la villa d'este I: *Thrénodie* (1877)
(Cypresses of the Villa d'Este)



From *Weihnachtsbaum* (1874-1876)
(Christmas Tree)

Schlummerlied (Slumber Song)
Ehemals (Old Times)
Carillon (Chimes)

From *Années de Pèlerinage Troisième année*
Sursum corda. Erhebet eure Herzen (1877)
(Lift Up Your Hearts)

The two pieces of Schoenberg's Op. 33 are the last of the five sets of short piano pieces written by the composer. By this time, Schoenberg had been using the 12-tone method for almost 10 years. In character, these pieces are warmer and more romantic in gesture than the earlier 12-tone pieces, and are solidly in the long Germanic tradition of short lyrical works for piano, with a predominantly meditative character. Op. 33a is the more dramatic of the two, with episodes of calm lyricism contrasted with increasingly active, even violent, outbursts. It begins with an arc of six rising and falling chords that almost seem to melt into each other. For the rest of the piece, Schoenberg uses the notes of these chords, in various permutations, to generate a wide variety of figurations, illustrating his compositional principle of continuous variation. Op. 33b is more long-lined and lyrical than Op. 33a. Because of its consistent use of melody and accompaniment, it can be compared to a "Song Without Words," a popular type of character piece from the 19th century. The first half presents two areas of contrasting, though related, melodies, the second area being more animated. Then follows an extensively developed but shortened restatement. The last section, functioning as a coda, states the opening melody with a more elaborate accompaniment and quietly ends in the lowest register of the piano.

Night Fantasies is a piano piece of continuously changing moods, suggesting the fleeting thoughts and feelings that pass through the mind during a period of wakefulness at night. The quiet, nocturnal evocation with which it begins and returns occasionally, is suddenly broken by a flighty series of short phrases that emerge and disappear. This episode is followed by many others of contrasting characters and lengths that sometimes break in abruptly and, at other times, develop smoothly out of what has gone before. The work culminates in a loud, obsessive, periodic repetition of an emphatic chord that, as it dies away, brings the work to its conclusion. In this score, I wanted to capture the fanciful, changeable quality of our inner life at a time when it is not dominated by strong, directive intentions or desires—to capture the poetic moodiness that, in an earlier romantic context, I enjoy in works of Robert Schumann like *Kreisleriana*, *Carnaval*, and *Davidsbundlertänze*.

--Elliott Carter

A popular conception of Liszt casts him as a composer of extroverted, showy, and to some degree, even shallow music, with the exception of a handful of masterpieces such as the great *Sonata in B Minor*. However, Liszt had many facets to his personality, and as he aged his music became more inward, enigmatic, even ascetic, and was in many ways the polar opposite of the music of his youth. In his own words, Liszt's late music is to his earlier music "as bitterness of heart is to exuberance of heart." There were many complex reasons for this gradual change of attitude, both external and internal. Among them were the death of two of his adult children, strained relationships with the remaining daughter Cosima and her husband Richard Wagner (she had left her first husband Hans von Bülow, a favorite student of Liszt's, causing great turmoil), the inability to marry his long-time love Princess Carolyne Wittgenstein, and disappointment with the lack of appreciation of his works. He also began to suffer bouts of depression in the mid 1870s. In 1881 he fell down a flight of stairs, the resulting serious injuries ushering in the beginning of poor health that would plague him until his death. Another sign of turning inwards was his growing spirituality. In 1865 he took the four minor orders of the Catholic Church, although he never became a priest.

Much has been written about the late style of Liszt, especially those characteristics which point forward to the 20th century. At the most extreme, there is a radical simplicity with stark unison effects, dark tone color, obsessive rhythms, and long single-tone lines that seem to dissolve into thin air. Harmonically, Liszt was the first composer to experience the dissolution of tonality (one piece he titled *Bagatelle Without Tonality*). There is also use of the whole-tone scale (anticipating musical impressionism), "atonal" successions of augmented chords, and unprecedented dissonances. In the words of biographer Alan Walker, "Gone are the days of creative abundance. It is almost as if he were trying to starve his compositions of the very notes they require to achieve their identity. His works frequently collapse into monody, and then into silence." Even Wagner quipped to Cosima that Liszt's late music was "budding insanity," and that he found it impossible to develop a taste for their dissonances. Liszt knew such extreme and personal music would fail to find an audience, and made no attempt to get much of it published. In fact, many of the late pieces weren't published until the 1920s and after. Regardless, Liszt did realize what he was accomplishing as evidenced by the famous quote that his only remaining ambition as a musician was to "hurl my lance into the boundless realms of the future."

La lugubre gondola No. 2

Late in 1882, while staying with the Wagners in Venice and seeing the funeral processions on the Venetian canals, Liszt had a strange premonition of Wagner's death, which led to the composition of the first *La lugubre gondola*. Less than two months later Wagner died, and his body was borne from his residence by gondola. The second version of 1885 is based on the same material, but is expanded and modified. After opening with a series of recitatives, the rocking movement in the left hand depicts the swaying of a gondola, and provides the accompaniment for the right hand lamentations, one marked *piangendo* (weeping). As with many of Liszt's late piano works, this one disintegrates into monody, and disappears with a hint of the whole-tone scale.

Nuages gris

Grey Clouds is probably the most famous of the late "funeral pieces," and is one of the most successful. It's often highlighted in history texts as a prime example of Liszt's late harmonic style. It also can be described as a gateway to modern music, as the ending drifts into keylessness and anticipates the coming of expressionism in music. Written a few weeks after his fall down the stairs where he sustained severe injuries, this piece seems to express the feelings of desolation produced by his long convalescence and permanently damaged health.

En rêve

This gentle nocturne was composed in Rome at the end of 1885, and is the last dated piano composition by Liszt. By the beginning of 1885, Liszt's eyesight was deteriorating rapidly, making it increasingly difficult to notate music. No sign of stress enters this dreamy music, which concludes serenely with ethereal trills in the upper register of the piano.

Schlaflos! Frage und Antwort

This unusual piece was written in 1883, not long after Wagner's death, and was prompted by a poem (now lost) written by a student. The tortured 'question' is in an obsessive e-minor, while the 'answer' is in Liszt's 'religious' key of E major, seemingly making this piece about redemption. As with most of the late piano pieces, Liszt had no intention of publishing *Schlaflos!*, and it did not appear in print until 1927.

Aux cyprès de la villa d'este

The title of this piece refers to a 16th century villa located in Tivoli, which is close to Rome. In 1864 Liszt made arrangements for the permanent use of three rooms in the living quarters, and from then on, he regularly spent periods of time there. The estate was especially famous for its fountains and giant ancient cypresses. The two cypress pieces were written in 1877, in the midst of a period of depression for Liszt. His sadness was given expression in the two "Cypress" threnodies. From letters, Liszt wrote, "I have just written a hundred or so measures for the piano. It is a fairly gloomy and disconsolate elegy; illumined towards the end by a beam of patient resignation..." "These sad pieces won't have much success and can do without it. I shall call them Threnodies, as the word elegy strikes me as too tender, almost worldly," "To tell the truth I sense in myself a terrible lack of talent compared with what I would like to express; the notes I write are pitiful. A strange sense of the infinite makes me impersonal and uncommunicative." The image of the giant dark cypresses is given especially powerful expression in the middle section of the piece. Pianist Alfred Brendel writes that most of the pieces in the 3rd volume of the *Years of Pilgrimage* are religious in character, and in the Cypress piece "the melancholy and menace which emanate from these huge trees give way to Christian consolation..."

Weihnachtsbaum

This set of twelve short pieces was written from 1874-1876 at the Villa d'Este. Several of the pieces are based on borrowed themes of popular Christmas music. Its lightheartedness and good spirits are the result of it having been written for his favorite granddaughter, Daniela von Bülow, the daughter of Cosima and Hans von Bülow. Some of the pieces of the set are cited as examples of Liszt's anticipation of impressionism, with the cheerful *Carillon* being a prime example. *Schlummerlied* is a gentle cradle song, with the Christ child falling asleep as the music trails off to silence. Here the effect is picturesque, as opposed to the similar ending of the gondola piece, which conveys desolation and strangeness. *Ehemals (Old Times)* seems to be about nostalgically remembering the past, with its thrice-recurring "drifting off in thought" motive, consisting of a repeated rising two-note figure. The story has come down that this piece is a recollection of the first meeting of Liszt with Princess Carolyne nearly 30 years earlier.

Sursum corda

Written in 1877 at the latest, *Sursum corda* takes its title from the Preface of the Mass, and is an example of one of the "religious" pieces from the third volume of the *Years of Pilgrimage*. The repeated theme over an almost constant E pedal point (Liszt's religious key) contains a rising 7th, illustrating in music the message of the subtitle: *Lift Up Your Hearts*. The first half of the piece gradually becomes more agitated and loud, culminating in a passage of whole tone octaves just before the climactic return of the theme. The piece ends in a blaze of affirmation, marked "grandioso."

Fall 2007—Spring 2008
Department of Music Free Events
Camp Concert Hall, unless otherwise noted

Anne Guthmiller, *soprano*
Dmitri Shteinberg, *piano*
Sunday, September 16—3p

Geoffrey Haydon, *piano*
Wednesday, September 19—7:30p

Family Weekend Concert
Friday, September 28—7:30p

Paul Hanson, *piano*
Sunday, September 30—3:00p

David Esleck Trio
Wednesday, October 3—7:30p

Balinese Wayang Kulit (Shadow Theater)
Gusti Putu Sudarta, *Puppeteer*
Sunday, October 7—3:00p
Cousins Studio Theater (Modlin)

Third Practice
Electroacoustic Music Festival
Friday, October 19 through
Saturday, October 20

Duo Piano Recital
Doris Wylee-Becker, *piano*
Richard Becker, *piano*
Sunday, November 4—3:00p

University Choir and Schola Cantorum
Sunday, November 11—3:00p

University Wind Ensemble
Sunday, November 18—7:30p

UR Jazz Ensemble & Jazz Combo
Monday, November 19—7:30p

Bruce Stevens, *organ*
Monday, November 26—7:30p
Cannon Memorial Chapel

Barry Salwen, *piano*
Wednesday, November 28—7:30p

Cuba Documentary Premiere and UR Jazz
Combo: "Cuba: Rhythm in Motion"
Friday, November 30—7:30p

University Chamber Music Ensembles
Monday, December 3—7:30p

University Orchestra
Wednesday, December 5—7:30p

University Balinese Gamelan & Dance
Thursday, December 6—7:30p

Annual Christmas Candlelight Concert
Sunday, December 9: 5 & 8:00p
Cannon Memorial Chapel



Spring 2008

Jeffrey Riehl, *tenor*
Kenneth Merrill, *piano*
Assisted by Jennifer Cable, *soprano*
Monday, January 14—7:30p

Richard Becker, *piano*
Sunday, February 3—3:00p

An Evening of Music by Béla Bartók
Matt Albert, *violin*
Matthew Duvall, *percussion*
Jennifer Cable, *soprano*
Paul Hanson, *piano*
Joanne Kong, *piano*
Ray Breakall, *percussion*
Monday, February 4—7:30p

Jeremy McEntire, *flute*
Sunday, February 24—3:00p

eighth blackbird
"The Only Moving Thing"
Wednesday, March 26—7:30p

Jazz and Brazilian Combo Concert
Wednesday, April 2—7:30p

University Choir & Schola Cantorum
Sunday, April 6—3:00p

University Balinese Gamelan and
Dance
Monday, April 7—7:30p

University Orchestra
Wednesday, April 9—7:30p

UR Jazz Ensemble & Jazz Combo
Monday, April 14—7:30p

University Wind Ensemble
Wednesday, April 16—7:30p

University Chamber Music Ensembles
Monday, April 21—7:30p