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UPCOMING TUTUNOV PIANO SERIES CONCERTS

Sergio Marchegiani and Marco Schiavo – March 23rd, 7:30 pm
Season Finale: Peter Serkin – April 20th, 7:30 pm

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PRESENTS

NIKITA FITENKO

AND

KATERINA ZAITSEVA

PIANO

MUSIC RECITAL HALL

FEBRUARY 2, 2018

7:30 PM

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

Biographies

Internationally acclaimed pianist and Yamaha Artist **Nikita Fitenko** has performed recitals and with orchestras in Europe, Asia, and South and North America. While performing a wide and diverse repertoire, Nikita Fitenko is an acknowledged master of Russian piano music. He holds degrees from St. Petersburg Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory (BM) and from the University of North Texas (MM & DMA). He recorded six commercial CDs for Altarus and Classical Records labels that are available through Amazon and iTunes. Dr. Fitenko is currently an Associate Professor of Piano Performance at the Catholic University of America in Washington DC. He is also Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Washington International Piano Festival as well as the founder of the international piano competitions in Louisiana and Florida.

Praised by the Fanfare magazine as a pianist with an “imaginative and colorful interpretive approach” **Katerina Zaitseva** has performed in the United States, Germany, Luxemburg, France, Italy, Portugal, South Korea, Japan, and Russia at major venues that have included the Moscow State Conservatory Hall, John F. Kennedy Center, National Gallery of Art, Yamaha Hall in New York, as well as the opening of the Meadows Museum of Art in Dallas, with Juan Carlos II of Spain in attendance. Ms. Zaitseva has been featured as soloist with many orchestras including the Russian Philharmonic Orchestra and Dallas Chamber Orchestra among others. Her four CD recordings released by the Classical Records label and available through Amazon, have garnered international critical acclaim. Currently a faculty member at the Levine School of Music and the International School of Music in Washington D.C., Katerina holds her Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Maryland, Master of Music from the Southern Methodist University, Bachelor of Music from the University of North Texas, and Diploma from the Music School affiliated with the Moscow State Conservatory in Russia.



He originally chose ‘Fantasy Dances’ as the title, the finally ‘Symphonic Dances. Both titles are appropriate, because dances dominate each of the three movement in this suite. After the introduction , the march-like first movement opens with insistent, repetitive motoric rhythm against a lively melody. The middle section brings a softer, more introspective lyrical passage, and after the dynamic return of the opening material, Rachmaninoff’s coda draws upon a theme from his first symphony.

The dark colors for the second movement’s melancholy Waltz suggest “more of an oppressive Slavic waltz than a lilting Viennese one” (critic James Keller). Rachmaninoff intentionally deflects the establishment of any continuity of mood and rhythm, alternating between 3/8, 6/8, and 9/8 meter. After the warmth of the middle section, the main ‘waltz’ returns “with helter-skelter figuration over pulsating string pizzicatos, and the dance breaks up in disarray” (biographer Barrie Martyn). The third movement begins with an introduction that heralds material in the slow middle section that follows the lively and extensive opening. It contains the Dies Irae chant Rachmaninoff turned to so often in his career – hardly the material for a dance movement – but he transforms it accordingly. The triumphant final section includes an ‘Alliuya’ passage from his All-night Vigil, Op. 15.

program notes by Ed Wight

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SCRIABIN

FIVE PRELUDES, OP. 74 (1914)

Russian composer and pianist Alexander Scriabin attended the Moscow Conservatory the same time as Rachmaninoff, both graduating in 1892. His focus as a composer was narrower, however. Aside from a small handful of orchestral works (including his piano concerto, three symphonies, and two tone poems), Alexander Scriabin wrote exclusively for the piano. His early works were deeply influenced by Chopin, as Scriabin also wrote waltzes, mazurkas, impromptus, nocturnes - and fifteen sets of preludes. His ten piano sonatas “arguably provided the most consistent contributions to the genre since the time of Beethoven’s set” (Scriabin scholar Jonathon Powell).

In the 20th century, Scriabin moved far beyond the lush romanticism of his early works. He held fervent belief in synesthesia - the relations of music and color – and owned a colored keyboard and its associated color lamps. In 1905 he also embraced the mysticism of theosophy, strongly reflected in his final orchestral tone poems *Poem of Ecstasy* (1908) and *Prometheus* (1910). Many of his final piano compositions from 1910 on were partial sketches for his gargantuan, quasi-religious (and unrealized) *Mysterium* for orchestra and chorus. This included his final composition, the *Five Preludes*, Op. 74.

Continuing his occasional use of post-tonal 12-note chords, Scriabin also based all five on the ‘mystic chord’ (C – F# - Bb – E – A – D). The entire set takes only about seven minutes to perform, a dense and concentrated early 20th-century exploration of atonality. Music historian Hugh MacDonald aptly sums up their importance: “Brevity, concentration, and understatement inform his best works. They are uncompromising in spirit and in style, and always utterly contemporary.”

RACHMANINOFF

SYMPHONIC DANCES, OP. 45 (1940)

In May 1940, after his latest concert season, Rachmaninoff went to an estate on Huntington, Long Island and wrote the *Symphonic Dances*, Op. 45. Because he sketched it out originally on a 4-stave score, some have concluded Rachmaninoff wrote it originally for piano duet. But instead, he proceeded directly from this short score to scoring it for orchestra. He also wrote a two-piano version shortly thereafter, which he performed privately with Vladimir Horowitz. Rachmaninoff hoped to perform it publicly on a concert tour with Horowitz as well, but died before this could be arranged. *Symphonic Dances* was his final composition, a special disappointment because it “seems to look ahead to a new vision...The gorgeous romantic sentimentality that was his lifelong trademark is essentially gone, replaced by a taut, muscular directness” (critic Orrin Howard).

Program

From *The Seasons*, Op. 37
October
April
November
December

Pyotr Tchaikovsky
(1840-1893)

Nikita Fitenko

From *Sonata Reminiscenza*
Forgotten Melodies, Op. 38, no. 1

Nikolai Medtner
(1880-1951)

Katerina Zaitseva

From *Barcarolle*
Six Morceaux, Op. 11, no. 1

Sergei Rachmaninoff
(1873-1943)

Katerina Zaitseva & Nikita Fitenko

Five Preludes, Op. 74
I. Dououreux déchirant
II. Tres lent, contemplatif
III. Allegro drammatico
IV. Lent, vague, indecis
V. Fier, belliqueux

Alexander Scriabin
(1871-1915)

Katerina Zaitseva

Intermission

Symphonic Dances, Op. 45
Non allegro
Andante con moto (Tempo di valse)
Lento assai – Allegro vivace – Lento assai. Come prima – Allegro vivace.

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Katerina Zaitseva & Nikita Fitenko

Program Notes

TCHAIKOVSKY

THE SEASONS, OP. 37B: EXCERPTS (1876)

The extraordinary popularity of Tchaikovsky's orchestral music - the ballets, symphonies, tone poems, concertos – at times obscures the fact that he wrote far more piano music and songs than any other genre. He started piano lessons at age five “and soon showed remarkable gifts” (1988 Norton / Grove Encyclopedia). In November 1875 the publisher of *Le Nouvelliste* - a monthly music magazine – approached Tchaikovsky with commission to write *The Seasons*. For this collection of twelve character pieces for piano (one for each month of the year) the publisher Nikolai Bernard agreed to supply both the subtitles and poetic epigraphs. Tchaikovsky happily accepted the idea, immediately sent him two ‘months’ (January and February), and finished the entire set by May 1876.

By this time Tchaikovsky was already a highly accomplished composer. He'd written three symphonies, two operas, the *Romeo and Juliet* fantasy, first piano concerto and first two string quartets. Tchaikovsky had also written two collections of “*Morceaux*” - six character pieces each in Opus 19 and Opus 21. With more such collections to come – of six, twelve, and eighteen pieces, this genre fit Tchaikovsky like a glove. Critic Peter Laki writes of *The Seasons* “Contrasted in tempo, mood and texture, they show the extent to which Tchaikovsky was able to treat even simple forms with a great deal of sophistication, especially with regard to harmony.”

October “*Autumn Song*” offers an almost haunting evocation of the colder season in rich harmonic colors, while April “*Snowdrop*” features a livelier style and figuration. November “*Troika*” opens lyrically before turning to a quick tempo and light-hearted figuration. The set closes with December “*Noel*” in a joyous tribute to the Christmas season. He did not intend them to be performed as a cycle, and some of the popular excerpts “are perhaps the most immediately attractive of Tchaikovsky's piano works” (*The Guardian*).

MEDTNER

FORGOTTEN MELODIES, OP. 38: no. 1, SONATA REMINISCENZA (1919-21)

One of the last great composer-pianists of the Romantic era, Nicolas Medtner graduated in 1900 from the Moscow Conservatory. He earned “the institution's gold medal as the outstanding pianist of his year.” In 1903, however, he decided “his true vocation after all was composition” (2001 *New Grove Dictionary*). He wrote three concertos, 106 songs, and 38 *Skasi*

(‘*Tales*’) – miniatures in the tradition of Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms. Furthermore, his fourteen piano sonatas constitute “a cycle to be set alongside Scriabin and Prokofiev as the most important Russian works in the genre” (*New Grove*).

Written as a single movement, the *Sonata Reminiscenza* is his tenth piano sonata and “his most performed” (according to the journal *Byzantion*). It comprises the first of eight works in Medtner's “*Forgotten Melodies*, Op. 38.” In 1919-20 he began assembling several volumes of such works “from notebooks of ideas he had written down over the years” (critic Steve Arloff). It is a wistful, melancholy piece, written with the knowledge that he and his wife could no longer live in Russia after the Revolution. (They left for the West in 1921.) Martin Barrie describes the opening melody as a “theme of ‘recollection’...After the exposition of the two main subjects, the development intensifies the mood of haunted anguish...The prevailing gloom is only briefly lifted by a brighter new theme unexpectedly introduced into the recapitulation, after which the main theme of recollection brings the work to a pensive close.”

RACHMANINOFF

SIX MORCEAUX, OP. 11: no. 1, BARCAROLLE (1894)

Rachmaninoff began his career in strong fashion in two different categories, graduating with distinction from the Moscow conservatory in both piano (1891) and composition (1892 – his one-act opera *Aleko*). Still years away from his celebrated preludes and sonatas, he turned to the piano duet in 1893 with the *Romance in G Major* and the *Fantasie-tableaux* (‘*Suite no. 1*’) in G Minor. And In 1894 Rachmaninoff wrote the *Six Morceaux* for piano four-hands, Op. 11.

He set each of the six pieces in a different key, and he opens the set with the *Barcarolle* in G minor. This key and genre seemed to hold special significance for him, because both the *Suite no. 1* for piano duet and the solo piano *Morceaux de salon*, Op. 10 also contained *Barcarolles* in G Minor. The standard dictionary definition of the *barcarolle* mentions “a piece in 6/8 time with a lilting rhythm suggesting [boat] songs by the Venetian gondoliers” (1988 Norton / Grove Encyclopedia). While Rachmaninoff sets it in 4/4 time, his frequent triple meter subdivisions nonetheless capture this spirit. The gently undulating figures accompany a lyric melody, and the bright piano figuration in the second half of the piece might suggest sparkles of light on the water. This atmospheric setting saves its most dramatic moment for last, as the final bars relieve the melancholy mood with a burst of concluding brightness in G Major.