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A graduate's recital in piano

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A GRADUATE'S RECITAL IN PIANO

An Abstract of a Thesis

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Music in Piano Performance and Pedagogy

Huajun Zhang

University of Northern Iowa

May 2017

This Recital Abstract by: Huajun Zhang

Entitled: A GRADUATE'S RECITAL IN PIANO

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the
Degree of Master of Music in Piano Performance and Pedagogy

Date

Professor Sean Botkin, Chair, Thesis Committee

Date

Dr. Lynn Worcester, Thesis Committee Member

Date

Dr. Dmitri Vorobiev, Thesis Committee Member

Date

Dr. Randall Harlow, Thesis Committee Member

Date

Dr. Kavita R. Dhanwada, Dean, Graduate College

This Recital Performance by: Huajun Zhang

Entitled: A GRADUATE'S RECITAL IN PIANO

Date of Recital: March 22, 2017

has been approved as meeting the recital requirements for the
Degree of Master of Music in Piano Performance and Pedagogy

Date

Professor Sean Botkin, Chair, Thesis Committee

Date

Dr. Lynn Worcester, Thesis Committee Member

Date

Dr. Dmitri Vorobiev, Thesis Committee Member

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Dr. Randall Harlow, Thesis Committee Member

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Dr. Kavita R. Dhanwada, Dean, Graduate College

ABSTRACT

On March 22, 2017, Huajun Zhang presented a full graduate piano recital in completion of her Master's degree in Piano Performance and Pedagogy. The recital was held at 8 p.m. in Davis Hall of the Gallagher-Bluedorn Performing Arts Center at the University of Northern Iowa. Pieces on the program included: Sonatas in F minor, K. 466 and F minor, K. 239 by Domenico Scarlatti; Sonata in A Major, K. 331 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart; Rondo Capriccioso in E Major, Opus 14 by Felix Mendelssohn; and Piano Concerto in A minor, Opus 16 by Edvard Grieg. This abstract contains further discussion of the performed works.

Two Sonatas in F Minor, K. 466, L. 118 and F Minor, K. 239, L. 281

by Domenico Scarlatti

Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757) was a prominent Italian composer, singer, and harpsichordist of the Baroque period. He was born into a musical family as the sixth child of Alessandro Scarlatti, who was also a renowned composer. His musical style was influenced by his early teachers, including Bernardo Pasquini, Gaetano Greco, and Francesco Gasparini. He was appointed as organist and composer of the Cappella Reale in Naples, Italy at the age of fifteen.¹ He left Italy and entered the service of the king of Portugal in 1719. In 1729, Scarlatti married Princess Ferdinand of Spain and served the

¹ Roberto Pagano, et al. "Scarlatti." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed March 6, 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/24708pg1>.

Spanish court for the rest of his life, fairly isolated from the rest of Europe.² Scarlatti's works cover a wide range of genres, including opera, large sacred works, masses, motets, cantatas, and keyboard works. He is most well-known today for his keyboard sonatas.³

Scarlatti composed over 555 keyboard sonatas. The first publication of a collection of thirty sonatas titled *Essercizi* (Exercises) was published in 1738.⁴ His sonatas were compiled by two renowned musicologists, Ralph Kirkpatrick who was known for his chronological catalog and Alessandro Longo who compiled a comprehensive catalog of Scarlatti's keyboard works. In Scarlatti's sonatas, he typically employed a balanced binary form, dramatizing and emphasizing the return of the tonic in the second section by reprising the latter part of the first section.⁵

Sonata in F minor, K. 466, L. 118 is a single movement work in binary form. It is one of his late masterpieces featuring enigmatic slow motion, enormous inner expression and lyricism. Two voices and light textures predominate throughout the work. It is marked *Andante Moderato* which enhances the ethereal sound of the instrument. It opens with a polyrhythmic motive that alternates between both hands and develops throughout the piece, expressing a passionate character in its lovely melodic flow. The key of the first section modulates from the tonic key of F minor to the dominant key of C minor.

² James Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude Victor Palisca, *A History of Western Music* eighth edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 516.

³ Pagano, *Scarlatti*.

⁴ Burkholder, *A History of Western Music*, 516.

⁵ Ibid.

The second section first modulates into various keys and then returns to the tonic key of F minor in the latter half. Arpeggio leaps, repeated phrases, and eighth notes create a peaceful atmosphere. The repeated phrases create an echo effect which establishes contrast in the work. Perfect cadences are used from G to C in measures 33 and 34 and from C to F in measures 75 and 76. Furthermore, one unique feature of this work is that Scarlatti presents triplets versus duple eighth notes. According to scholar Ralph Kirkpatrick, Scarlatti rarely used these three against two rhythms as found in Sonata K. 466.⁶

Sonata in F minor, K. 239, L. 281 is also a single movement work in binary form. It is full of swirling figurations with an *Allegro* tempo marking, presenting a jaunty and playful rhythmic motive. This catchy, brief motive repeats throughout and dominates the entire piece. In the second section, the material is imaginatively developed and maintains the festive and lively mood of the music.

Scarlatti spent most of his career in Portugal and Spain where the guitar was a popular instrument.⁷ The influence from the Spanish style of music is largely found in this sonata. For example, the bass line and the repeated notes all suggest a guitar-like effect. In general, the scales, huge jumps, fast running notes, and Spanish rhythmic and melodic traits make this sonata attractive and unique.

⁶ Ralph Kirkpatrick, *Domenico Scarlatti* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1953), 398.

⁷ Malcolm Boyd, *Domenico Scarlatti: Master of music* (New York, Schirmer Books, 1986), 130.

Sonata in A Major, K. 331

by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) was a prolific Austrian composer and the son of Leopold Mozart, who was also a famous composer. Mozart's father noted Mozart's musical gifts at an early age. Mozart started to learn music at four years old and began composing music at age five and his first known public performance was held in 1761 when he was only five years old. Mozart was already well known as both performer and composer by the age of thirteen. By 1781, Mozart was reputed to be the finest keyboard player in Vienna. Mozart's works cover a wide range of genres, among which the piano sonatas, piano concertos, operas, string quartets, and the symphonies are most admired. His personal compositional style was remarkable for its richness of texture and harmony, formal elegance, and melodic beauty. Mozart composed approximately twenty solo piano sonatas. The *Piano Sonata in A Major, K. 331* is one of the most famous works known for its third movement, The Turkish March. The "K" in K. 331 refers to a nineteenth-century Austrian musicologist, Ludwig Ritter von Köchel, who compiled a chronological catalog of Mozart's works.⁸

The *Piano Sonata in A Major, K. 331* has three movements. The first movement, *Andante grazioso* (walking pace, gracefully), is in a rounded binary form in 6/8 time (compound duple). This movement is very unique with a theme and six variations in A

⁸ Pagano, *Scarlatti*.

Major. Mozart did not conform to the convention of starting with an Allegro movement in sonata form; instead, he applied a relaxing and lullaby-like theme and variations. The theme contains two repeated sections which are simple, homophonic, short and catchy. Even though the key of A Major is established, Mozart introduces a minor key in variation III. The use of occasional dissonances in this section is one of the most unique features of the entire movement. In addition, the use of phrasing, dynamic change, decorative melody, and diverse tempi depict different emotions and styles into every variation. All of these compositional techniques make this movement incredibly memorable.

The second movement, *Menuetto and Trio*, is in a standard minuet and trio form in A Major. In this musical form, the minuet section is followed by a trio, a contrasting melody in ternary form, followed by a repetition of the minuet.⁹ Section A, the minuet, is irregular in its use of three phrases of different lengths, as opposed to a traditional melodic form. The first phrase (measures 1-4) ends on a half cadence. The second phrase (measures 5-10) is distinct from the first phrase and ends on a perfect authentic cadence (PAC). However, the PAC cadence is not the end of section A. Rather, leaping grace notes surprisingly lead to a third phrase (measures 11-18) which modulates, ending in a PAC in E Major. Compared to section A, section B (measures 19-30) is quite short in E minor, ending with an authentic cadence in E Major. The following return of section A makes

⁹ Ibid.

this piece in rounded binary form.

The third movement, *Alla turca: Allegretto*, is widely known and called the “Turkish March” in A Major. Mozart composed the music in the Turkish style, a popular trend in Vienna at the time. He imitated the sounds of the percussion. For example, from measures 20 to 32, the music is embellished with percussive effects. This movement is in rondo form A–B–C–D–E–C–A–B–C–Coda, with each section (except the coda) being repeated twice. This movement is played deliberately and quickly. Section A has one phrase which is repeated in A minor. This section starts with a swirling sequential melody in sixteenth notes and ends on the dominant key of E. Section B (measures 8-24) starts with a descending sequential line, then returns to the opening idea from Section A, ending in A minor. Section C (measures 24-32), in A Major, is a march-like theme in octaves over an arpeggiated chord accompaniment emphasizing the strong beats.

None of the three movements of this sonata are in sonata-allegro form. This uniqueness, along with the unforgettable melodies and various dramatic compositional techniques put this sonata in an uncommon place in the classical repertoire.

Rondo Capriccioso in E Major, Opus 14

by Felix Mendelssohn

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) was German pianist, conductor, organist, and composer. He was one of the most versatile and talented musical prodigies in history and

was on the cutting edge of German music during the 1830s and 40s. His music was greatly influenced by J.S. Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Handel, and Weber, and represents the style of the generation of German composers after Beethoven, a style between Classicism and Romanticism.¹⁰

Rondo Capriccioso, Opus 14 begins with a slow *Andante* introduction in 4/4 meter and E Major followed by a *Presto* movement in 6/8 meter and in the parallel key of E minor. The slow *Andante* introduction is like an operatic aria that is very lyrical and romantic. The second fast *Presto* section is the *Rondo* in ABACA form. The key progression, from E Major in the slow section to E Minor in the fast section, is opposite to the usual convention of progressing from minor to Major. This work is one of the representative compositions of Mendelssohn's keyboard style, appealing and direct melodies presented through an exquisite and balanced form.

The introduction starts with three measures (measures 1-3) of pianissimo, resonant chords accompanied by a sturdy bass in E Major. The cantabile setting is very song-like, with a lyrical and arching melody over rich chordal accompaniment. From measure 10, the placid atmosphere is disturbed by the sixteenth notes which drive the music to a dramatic climax in C Major at measure 13. The introduction closes on the dominant key of B Major with rising scales.

¹⁰ R. Larry Todd. "Mendelssohn, Felix." Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press, accessed March 7, 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51795pg7>.

The *Presto* section contains a very electrifying Rondo in E Minor which starts with a soft dynamic and hushed theme. The marking, *leggiero*, (with a light touch) invites a light and lively character to this section. This section is filled with flashy ascending and descending arpeggios, chromatic scales, double and parallel thirds, and double octaves used to link sections. After a brief development section, the coda ends splendidly in E minor with *fortissimo* double octaves following the Rondo theme's last appearance.

Piano Concerto in A Minor Opus 16

by Edvard Grieg

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907) was a Norwegian composer, conductor, and pianist. He was a promoter of Norwegian music and the nation's leading composer of the time. Grieg was the fourth of five children born in a musical family. Both of his parents were amateur musicians. Grieg started taking piano lessons from his mother when he was six years old. His first composition was composed when he was fifteen years old. His works cover diverse genres including a capella vocal works, vocal songs, chamber music, symphonies, piano solos, piano duets, and one piano concerto. His piano concerto is considered an outstanding work in the piano literature.¹¹

Piano Concerto in A minor, Opus 16, Grieg's only concerto, was composed in 1868 when Grieg lived with his wife Nina and their daughter in Copenhagen, Denmark.¹² The

¹¹ John Horton and Nils Grinde. "Grieg, Edvard." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed March 7, 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/11757>.

¹² *Ibid*.

concerto consists of three movements: fast-slow-fast. The first movement, *Allegro molto moderato*, in A minor and sonata-allegro form, is the most well-known among the three movements. A crescendo roll from the timpani opens the concerto, leading to a powerful A minor chord from the full orchestra and the piano solo. A passionate piano solo virtuosic cadenza-like passage immediately enters in measure 2 with impetuous descending parallel octave chords and ends with arpeggios and chords, which outline the key of A minor. This compositional approach makes the beginning brilliant and dramatic. The main theme is introduced by the orchestra in measure 7 and is then taken over by the piano. The second theme is introduced by the cellos in measure 49. While this movement contains contrasting thematic ideas, some of the ideas are related which allows the listener to easily follow the music. The development section (measures 89-116) is completely based on the first main theme. The recapitulation (measures 117-175) is a restatement of the exposition in A Major. This movement concludes with a brilliant and exciting cadenza and a brief coda in A minor.

The second movement is a structurally simple *Adagio* in 3/8 time and in the key of D-flat Major. It reflects an intimate scene by employing expressive strings, brass, and woodwind solos. The piano enters after a long orchestral passage, introducing a beautiful descending motive in measure 29. The placid mood is shattered by a dramatic main theme in measure 55. At last, the movement closes with a quiet ending, the placid theme

idea of the beginning of the movement occurring again and fading away, continuing to the third movement without pause.

The third movement, *Allegro moderato molto e marcato*, is in the key of A Major. The first theme (measures 93-103) in A minor is in a Norwegian folk dancing style, very rhythmic and engaging. Compared to the first theme, the second theme (measures 130-133) is more playful. A placid interlude of a flute solo introduces the piano solo which features a lyrical theme and evokes beautiful images. The dancing style main theme and second theme occur again in measures 340 and 377 for an extended development to push this movement to the climax. The music is transformed from A minor to A Major after a brief piano cadenza (measures 452-456). The folk dance theme returns once again at measure 457 for a melodramatic coda. A virtuosic and brilliant final cadenza is alternately played by both the orchestra and piano. It is very dramatic that the concerto ends with the earlier flute solo interlude theme but now is transposed to the key of A Major. Both orchestra and piano solo play equally important roles in this concerto. All of those attractive themes and transcendental compositional techniques make this work very popular and a favorite among audiences around the world.

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School of Music
University of Northern Iowa

presents

Huajun Zhang, Piano
In a Graduate Recital

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Master of Music degree in Piano Performance and Pedagogy
From the Studio of Professor Sean Botkin

Sonata in F minor, K. 466, L. 118
Sonata in F minor, K. 239, L. 281

Domenico Scarlatti
(1685-1757)

Sonata in A Major, K. 331
Andante grazioso
Menuetto and Trio
Alla turca: Allegretto

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

Rondo Capriccioso in E Major, Opus 14

Felix Mendelssohn
(1809-1847)

Intermission

Piano Concerto in A minor, Opus 16
Allegro molto moderato
Adagio
Allegro moderato molto e marcato

Edvard Grieg
(1843-1907)

Sean Botkin, orchestral reduction

Davis Hall, at 8:00 P.M.

Wednesday, March 22, 2017