

2022

Graduate recital: Colin Evers, piano

Colin Evers
University of Northern Iowa

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GRADUATE RECITAL: COLIN EVERS, PIANO

An Abstract of a Recital
Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Music

Colin Evers
University of Northern Iowa
May 2022

This Study By: Colin Evers

Entitled: Graduate Recital: Colin Evers, Piano

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the

Degree of Master of Music

Date

Dr. Sean Botkin, Chair, Recital Committee

Date

Dr. Robin Guy, Recital Committee Member

Date

Dr. Andrea Johnson, Recital Committee Member

Date

Dr. Daniel Swilley, Recital Committee Member

Date

Dr. Jennifer Waldron, Dean, Graduate College

This Recital Performance By: Colin Evers

Entitled: Graduate Recital: Colin Evers, Piano

Date of Recital: April 14, 2022

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the

Degree of Master of Music

Date

Dr. Sean Botkin, Chair, Recital Committee

Date

Dr. Robin Guy, Recital Committee Member

Date

Dr. Andrea Johnson, Recital Committee Member

Date

Dr. Daniel Swilley, Recital Committee Member

Date

Dr. Jennifer Waldron, Dean, Graduate College

ABSTRACT

On April 14th, 2022, pianist Colin Evers performed a solo piano recital in Davis Hall of the Gallagher-Bluedorn Performing Arts Center, at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls, Iowa. The recital consisted of Piano Sonata No. 8 in C minor Op. 13 “Pathétique” by Ludwig van Beethoven, *Sonatine pour Piano* by Maurice Ravel, *Liebesleid* by Fritz Kreisler, arranged for solo piano by Sergei Rachmaninoff, Étude No. 12 in D-sharp minor, Op. 8, by Alexander Scriabin, and Ballade No. 4 in F minor Op. 52 by Frédéric Chopin.

Piano Sonata No. 8 in C minor, Op. 13 “Pathétique” by Ludwig van Beethoven

Ludwig van Beethoven is regarded by many as the greatest and most influential composer of all time. His ability to convey the complexity of emotion through music was unparalleled. J. W. N. Sullivan writes, “Beethoven does not communicate to us his perceptions or his experiences. He communicates to us the attitude based on them. We may share with him that unearthly state where the struggle ends and pain dissolves away, although we know but little of his struggle and have not experienced his pain.”¹

Beethoven’s solo piano works are indicative of his brilliance. Piano Sonata No. 8, Op. 13 is nicknamed the “Pathétique” Sonata. Often, people associate the nickname with the word “pathetic.” In her article “Pathos, and the Pathétique: Rhetorical Stance in Beethoven’s C-minor Sonata, Op. 13, Elaine R. Sisman suggests that the root of the word

¹ J. W. N. Sullivan, *Beethoven - His Spiritual Development* (Read Books, 2007), 9.

“pathétique” is actually the Greek word “pathos.”² Pathos is a Greek pillar of rhetoric which refers to appealing to the audience’s emotion. Over time, the word more frequently described negative emotions, specifically, which may account for the intense drama which can be heard within the work.

Beethoven’s “Pathétique” Sonata consists of three movements. The first is in sonata-allegro form. However, Beethoven takes liberty by adding an Introduction before the presentation of the first theme. The tempo of this introduction is marked *grave*. Despite its slow, almost funeral march-like nature, the metric indications are very precise. The theme of the introduction occurs later in the piece. A long, falling chromatic scale over a dominant seventh chord in the left hand concludes the introduction and leads the piece into the primary theme. This theme consists of a pulsating tremolo in the right hand and agitated ascending right hand intervals. The tempo change between the introduction and the primary theme creates intense drama. The primary theme is sequenced to transition into the secondary theme, which is characterized by a rising four note motive in E-flat minor. A standard classical sonata in C minor would typically see this secondary theme in E-flat major, the relative major of C minor. Beethoven’s choice to write the theme in a minor key is indicative of his tendency to take compositional liberties even in his earlier works.

² Elaine R. Sisman, "Pathos and Pathétique: Rhetorical Stance in Beethoven's Piano Sonata in C minor, Op.13," in *Beethoven Forum*, ed. Christopher Reynolds, Lewis Lockwood, and James Webster (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 81-105.

Following the exposition, Beethoven repeats material from the Introduction in G minor. The return of the *grave* tempo is sudden, and strikingly dramatic. Beethoven begins the development with a return to the agitated tempo, using thematic material from the introduction. Fragments of each of the themes are quoted and developed until the primary theme returns in C minor, marking the beginning of the recapitulation. The *grave* introduction is reiterated once more before the end of the movement.

The second movement of the Pathétique Sonata is a slow rondo in A-flat major. The lyrical theme of the A section is familiar to many musicians. The phrases are long, and they sound above a pattern of pulsing sixteenth notes which provide harmonic foundation. The B and C sections are increasingly dark sounding, contrasting the beauty of the A section. The movement concludes with a coda.

The third and final movement is also in rondo form. It is in C minor, and the tempo is marked Allegro. An interesting note about the theme of the A section is that it begins with the same four note figure as the secondary theme of the first movement. This movement travels through the keys of C minor, E-flat major, A-flat major, and C major. A false resolution to A-flat major near the end of the work references the key area of the second movement. The major resolution is short-lived and a resounding dominant to tonic cadence in C minor concludes the work.

Sonatine pour Piano by Maurice Ravel

Maurice Ravel is a composer of French impressionist music. He creates musical imagery using diatonic melodies, complex harmonies, and Lisztian pianistic techniques to

create descriptive music.³ His *Sonatine pour Piano* was written between 1903 and 1905. It was submitted for a competition in the *Weekly Critical Review* in 1903. The prize was 100 francs, and submissions needed to be 75 measures or less. Ravel submitted his first movement, which exceeds 75 measures. No other submissions were made, and there is still some mystery over whether or not Ravel received the prize money. Within the next two years, Ravel wrote the other two movements and published the full work.

The first movement opens in the key of F-sharp minor, and is to be played sweetly and expressively. The defining motive of the first movement consists of a falling fourth followed by a rising scale. The motive is developed and fragmented throughout the piece, and is even referenced in later movements. The harmonies are complex and intricate. Extended chords and planing create an ethereal atmosphere that is rich in impressionistic sounds. The movement ends on a beautifully extended F-sharp major chord.

The second movement is in D-flat major. Enharmonically, this movement could have been spelled in C-sharp major, which would be expected if the first movement was analyzed in F-sharp major. Likely for ease of reading, Ravel chooses D-flat major. It begins with a rising fifth melodic motive, the inverse of the falling fourth motive in the first movement. The music is soft and atmospheric, with a climactic crescendo to fortissimo that precedes quoted material from the first movement.

The third movement begins again in F-sharp minor with a rapid sixteenth note passage. The right hand accents a rising fourth above the texture and provides the

³ Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music: Ninth Edition* (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), 787-788.

melody. The movement travels through numerous keys, developing melodies based on rising and falling perfect intervals which have been present in all three movements.

Liebesleid by Fritz Kreisler, arranged for solo piano by Sergei Rachmaninoff

Fritz Kreisler was a renowned virtuoso violinist and composer. A child prodigy, Kreisler entered the Vienna conservatory at age 7, and graduated from the Paris conservatory at age 12.⁴ Kreisler composed *Liebesleid* (Love's Sorrow) in conjunction with *Liebesfreud* (Love's Joy) in 1905. Kreisler falsely attributed the pieces to a composer named Joseph Lanner, and it was not until 1935 that Kreisler admitted that the pieces were his own. The transcriptions were written by Rachmaninoff prior to that date in 1931. Kreisler has recorded himself playing *Liebesleid*. His rich tone and vibrato are prodigious.⁵ Rachmaninoff's transcription of the work reflects the virtuosity of both composer-performers.

The work consists of two primary sections, A and B, which alternate with increasing amounts of variation. The opening is in A minor and is played as a waltz. Despite the minor key and the title, "Love's Sorrow," the dance-like nature of the piece alleviates some of the sorrowful feelings of the A section and creates a bittersweet sound. Rachmaninoff's first iteration of the B section is perhaps the most virtuosic section of the piece. Suddenly transitioning to A major, the B section's main theme is hidden within sweeping arpeggiated figures divided between the hands. The notes of the theme are

⁴ Michael Fink, "The Story Behind: Fritz Kreisler's *Liebesleid*," accessed 3/28/2022, <https://riphil.wordpress.com/2021/01/04/the-story-behind-fritz-kreislers-liebesleid/?msclkid=eb4618aeae1111ecb1137980fd30c4e0>

⁵ Fritz Kreisler, "Liebesleid," 14th February, 1930, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jniNETA36Us>

marked with tenutos, indicating that they should be brought out above the texture, a challenging feat. The final iteration of the A section features its primary theme juxtaposed with broken staccato chords creating a sense of restlessness. A virtuosic cadenza drives the piece towards the final iteration of the B section, which, interestingly, is presented in its simplest variation. This suggests that after all the constant turmoil and battle between light and dark, an understanding of what is truly important can be achieved.

Étude No. 12 in D-sharp Minor, Op. 8 by Alexander Scriabin

Alexander Scriabin was born in 1872 in Moscow. Scriabin's earliest works are tonal, and influenced by Romantic composers such as Chopin. The harmonic language of his later works is more complex and makes use of more exotic scales and chromaticism. Scriabin was a synesthete, and as a result, he was capable of seeing colors as a neurological response to hearing music.⁶

Scriabin's *Twelve Etudes*, op. 8, are some of his earlier tonal works. Rich in color and emotion, each etude focuses on a specific technical challenge. The musical style is reminiscent of that found in Chopin's études. Scriabin's Étude No. 12 in D-sharp minor is the best known étude of the set, and perhaps his best-known solo piano composition.⁷ The piece consists of three sections in ABA form. Focusing primarily on octaves, the piece's heroic A theme is instantly recognizable to many people. The theme is sequenced upwards three times, followed by a falling octave gesture. The B section is much more

⁶ Burkholder, *A History of Western Music*, 801.

⁷ Grant Hiroshima, "Twelve Etudes, Op. 8 (Alexander Scriabin)," accessed 3/28/2022, <https://www.hollywoodbowl.com/musicdb/pieces/4400/twelve-etudes-op-8>

contemplative and flowing, but no less technically challenging. Rapidly repeated chords create drama and tension against the returning A theme at the end of the piece.

Ballade No. 4 in F minor, Op. 52 by Frédéric Chopin

Frédéric Chopin was born in Poland in 1810, and is widely regarded as one of the greatest piano composers of all time. Composing almost exclusively solo piano repertoire, Chopin's compositional style is rich in expression and romanticism. His technical brilliance and expressive style has influenced many composers. That influence is still felt today. Chopin is the originator of the modern ballade form, which is reminiscent of sonata form in its development of themes.⁸ A ballade is the musical counterpart to a ballad in poetry. A ballad is typically a dramatic narrative of epic heroes who overcome challenges to achieve greatness. The modern ballade form in music is full of expression and varying moods that take the listener on a journey. The story-like nature of Chopin's ballades allow for a wide range of emotions.

The fourth ballade opens with repeated octaves which slowly unfold into a beautiful, lyric melody in C major. After the conclusion of this C major introduction, the main theme in F minor is presented, and quickly transposed to A-flat major. Other themes are added and interwoven through a number of keys which vary in color and mood before a fiery coda written in contrapuntal style brings the piece to its close.

⁸ "Chopin Music," last modified 13 June, 2009, <https://web.archive.org/web/20100127033624/http://www.chopinmusic.net/works/ballades>

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presents

Colin Evers, Piano
In a Graduate Recital

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

Piano Sonata No. 8 in C minor, Op. 13 “Pathétique”

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770 – 1827)

- I. Grave
- II. Adagio Cantabile
- III. Allegro

Liebesleid

Fritz Kreisler arr. By Sergei Rachmaninoff
(1873 – 1943)

Etude in D-sharp Minor Op. 8, No. 12

Alexander Scriabin
(1872 – 1915)

Intermission

Sonatina pour Piano

Maurice Ravel
(1875 – 1937)

- I. Modéré
- II. Mouvement de Menuet
- III. Animé

Ballade No. 4 in F Minor, Op. 52

Frédéric Chopin
(1810 – 1849)

Thursday, April 14, 2022, 8 P.M.

Davis Hall, Gallagher-Bluedorn