



Photo: Evgeny Eutykhov

BEHZOD ABDURAIMOV, PIANO

Wednesday, January 15, 2020, 7:30 p.m.

PROGRAM

Frédéric Chopin
(1810-1849)

24 Preludes, Op. 28

ca. 40'

- no. 1. Agitato
- no. 2. Lento
- no. 3. Vivace
- no. 4. Largo
- no. 5. Molto allegro
- no. 6. Lento assai
- no. 7. Andantino
- no. 8. Molto agitato
- no. 9. Largo
- no. 10. Molto allegro
- no. 11. Vivace
- no. 12. Presto

- no. 13. Lento
- no. 14. Allegro
- no. 15. Sostenuto
- no. 16. Presto con fuoco
- no. 17. Allegretto
- no. 18. Molto allegro
- no. 19. Vivace
- no. 20. Largo
- no. 21. Cantabile
- no. 22. Molto agitato
- no. 23. Moderato
- no. 24. Allegro appassionato

Intermission

Claude Debussy
(1862-1918)

Children's Corner

ca. 32'

- Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum
- Jimbo's Lullaby
- Serenade for the Doll

- The Snow is Dancing
- The Little Shepherd
- Golliwog's Cakewalk

Modest Mussorgsky
(1839-1881)

Pictures at an Exhibition

ca. 34'

- Promenade
- 1. The Gnome
- Promenade (2nd)
- 2. The Old Castle
- Promenade (3rd)
- 3. Tuileries
(Children's Quarrel after Games)
- 4. Cattle
- Promenade (4th)

- 5. Ballet of Unhatched Chicks
- 6. Two Polish Jews, One Rich, the Other Poor:
"Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle"
- 7. Limoges. The Market (The Great News)
- 8. Catacombs (Roman Tomb)—With the
Dead in a Dead Language
- 9. The Hut on Hen's Legs (Baba Yaga)
- 10. The Bogatyr Gates (In the Capital in Kiev)



Behzod Abduraimov is sponsored by **John Frueh**.

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About Behzod Abduraimov



Photo: Evgeny Eutykhov

“With prodigious technique and rhapsodic flair, Mr. Abduraimov dispatched the work’s challenges, including burst upon burst of arm-blurring octaves, with eerie command.” (*The New York Times*)

Behzod Abduraimov performs with leading orchestras worldwide, collaborating with prestigious conductors such as

Valery Gergiev, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Lorenzo Viotti, James Gaffigan, Jakub Hrůša and Santtu-Matias Rouvali.

In 2019/20 he returns to Carnegie Hall for two performances: his second Stern Auditorium recital, with a program of Chopin, Debussy, and Mussorgsky; and performing Tchaikovsky’s Piano Concerto No.1 with the Münchner Philharmoniker under Valery Gergiev following their concerts in Munich. He also serves as Artist-in-Residence with the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, appearing twice under Lorenzo Viotti and in recital.

Other highlights this season include Orchestre National de France, Philharmonia Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Cincinnati, and Sydney Symphonies. He will perform in concerto and recital at the Alte Oper Frankfurt and further recitals include the International Piano Series in London, the Meesterpianisten Series at the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Spivey Hall in Atlanta, and the Melbourne Recital Centre, among others.

Behzod and cellist Truls Mørk have developed a formidable duo, with tours in Europe and the US. In 2020 they present Beethoven, Franck, and Prokofiev at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris and at Kings Place, London, and in autumn

2019 they recorded together. Behzod has also established a relationship with the English Chamber Orchestra, whom he directed in Beethoven and Mozart from the piano in 2019. In 2019/20 he will direct Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No.2 with the Camerata RCO as part of the 20th anniversary season of the İş Sanat Concert Hall, Istanbul.

Recent engagements have included with Orchestre de Paris as part of their Rachmaninov weekend, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchester, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, and the Cleveland Orchestra. In July 2018 he returned to the Hollywood Bowl with a spectacular performance of Rachmaninov’s Piano Concerto No.2 with the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Gustavo Dudamel. Summer 2019 included re-invitations to Verbier, Rheingau, La Roque Antheron, and Lucerne Festivals. Last season Behzod was presented in recital by Chicago Symphony presents, 92nd Street Y, Vancouver Recital Series, Tippet Rise Arts Center, Kölner Philharmonie, and Festspielhaus Baden-Baden.

His 2012 debut CD of Liszt, Saint-Saëns, and Prokofiev for Decca won the Choc de Classica and Diapason Découverte and his first concerto disc for the label featured Prokofiev’s Piano Concerto No.3 and Tchaikovsky’s Concerto No.1. A film of his BBC Proms debut in 2016 with the Münchner Philharmoniker under Gergiev was released as a DVD in 2018.

Born in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in 1990, Behzod began the piano aged five as a pupil of Tamara Popovich at Uspensky State Central Lyceum in Tashkent. In 2009 he won First Prize at the London International Piano Competition with Prokofiev’s Piano Concerto No.3. He studied with Stanislav Ioudenitch at the International Center for Music at Park University, Missouri, where he is Artist-in-Residence.

Program Notes

24 Preludes, Op. 28 Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

The term “prelude” is one of the most slippery terms in classical music, denoting a loosely structured, sometimes improvised work originally for keyboard or lute. Over the course of four centuries, the prelude morphed considerably in form and function. Moreover, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many pieces fitting this general description were also called by other names (*toccata*, *intonazione*, *ricercare*, etc.). By the seventeenth century in Germany, the *praeludium* developed into an important part of the Lutheran church service, occurring at the beginning and end of the service

or to attract the listener’s attention and define the mode or tonality of a following concerted work, cantata, or chorale. By the time of Dietrich Buxtehude, the teacher and idol of the young Johann Sebastian Bach, the prelude had morphed into an elaborate, often multi-sectional keyboard work, either self-standing or preparatory to the more tightly structured fugue.

In Italy, France and Spain, where prelude-type pieces were called by other titles, the genre was decidedly more secular in nature. By the eighteenth century in northern Europe, preludes also began to detach from the church service and specifically from the keyboard, becoming self-sufficient short compositions or introductions to dance suites (as in Bach’s unaccompanied cello suites). While many composers left

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behind individual preludes, they often collected them in sets of one for each mode or major and minor tonality, the most famous collection being Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, in which each prelude is paired with a corresponding fugue.

Of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century preludes, Chopin's 24 Preludes, Op. 28, is probably the best-known set. The individual pieces were composed between 1836 and 1839, and published simultaneously in Leipzig, Paris, and London. The collection contains compositions of varying lengths and moods, arranged by key signature (C major, A minor, G major, E minor...) according to the circle of fifths, rather than chromatically by key, as were Bach's (C major, C minor, C-sharp major, C-sharp minor...). Again, unlike Bach's set, the preludes vary in length, although they are all relatively short; the longest, in D-flat major (89 measures) and the shortest (12 measures) in C minor. In this regard, they resemble some of Beethoven's Op. 116 and Op. 129 sets of Bagatelles. In their brevity, some of the preludes present only a flash of emotional insight, a quality that made Chopin's friend and admirer, Robert Schumann, to view them as "...sketches, beginnings of études, or, so to speak, ruins, individual eagle pinions, all disorder and wild confusions." The "sketchiness" of Schumann's comment can often refer to the absence of repeats or the B section of ternary (ABA) song forms, features present in the longer preludes.

In 1835, Chopin abandoned his performing career, choosing to devote his attention to composing and teaching piano. There is evidence that, like Bach, Chopin used the preludes as teaching tools – although the set is in no way ordered by level of difficulty (as is Bartók's *Mikrokosmos*). As teaching works, each prelude focuses on a different pianistic technique, but more importantly, on an aspect of musical expression. Although he was a performer and composer for one of Western music's most percussive instruments, Chopin regarded the human voice, as exemplified in the bel canto style, as the ultimate means of musical expression. It is, therefore, no surprise to find in nearly all the preludes a readily singable melody, usually accompanied by an ostinato figure that accentuates the expressive quality of the melodic line as in No. 15 in D-flat major. In the most technically difficult preludes, such as No. 19 in E-flat major and No. 24 in D minor, much of the technical difficulty comes in bringing out the melody in a single hand that must also participate in the accompaniment. One of Chopin's stylistic characteristics that is seldom stressed is his occasional use of startling dissonances and harmonic progressions, as in the A-minor Prelude. The variety of moods and emotions evoked in these 24 brief pieces is astounding, and it is on these qualities that the performer and listener should concentrate.

Children's Corner

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Like most composers, Claude Debussy battled continuously to make ends meet and satisfy his publisher. He churned out songs, piano pieces, and orchestral works for public consumption, but the *Children's Corner* (original title in English) was a private, intimate piano work, written in 1906-08 for his little daughter Claude-Emma, known as Chouchou. He dedicated it to her with "...her father's loving apologies for what follows." Debussy was influenced by Modest Mussorgsky's song cycle *The Nursery*, responding to its intuitive art: "It is like the art of an inquiring savage, discovering music step by step, dictated only by his feelings."

While some of the titles are childish, the music is not child's play. The first piece, "Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum" (Steps to Mount Parnassus) refers humorously to a volume of piano finger exercises of Muzio Clementi. The second, "Jimbo's Lullaby," describes the gentle elephant of children's stories. The third, "Serenade for the Doll," was the first piece to be written and refers to the first doll in his daughter's crib; the strumming piano figure imitates a guitar or lute.

"The Snow is Dancing," in the style of a Baroque toccata, captures in short order the intensifying of the storm. "The Little Shepherd" starts with the imitation of a free, unaccompanied tune on a shepherd's pipe, gradually acquiring complex harmonies, and finally returning to its simple form.

Best known of the set is the last, "Golliwog's Cakewalk," one of the first harbingers of the jazz mania that was to overtake Europe. The little motivic refrain that introduces the second part of the piece is a parody on the opening phrase of Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. There was intense anti-Wagner sentiment in France, partly on aesthetic grounds but also political ones, the bitter Franco-Prussian War of 1870 (which France lost ignominiously). French composers loved to write takeoffs on Wagner, especially to popular dances; the most famous are a quadrille based on Leitmotifs from the *Ring* composed jointly by Gabriel Fauré and André Messager, and Emmanuel Chabrier's *Souvenir de Bayreuth*, based on *Tristan*. While Wagner's unresolved chord progression stretched the limits of tonal harmony, Debussy was expanding the repertory of modal melodies beyond the standard major and minor, a factor quite apparent in this sophisticated children's piece.

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Pictures at an Exhibition

Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881)

Modest Mussorgsky, one of the wild cards of nineteenth century Russian music, left very few completed scores by the time of his early death from alcoholism. Of his meager output, the operas *Boris Godunov* and the uncompleted *Khovanshchina*, some songs, the short orchestral score *St. John's Night on Bald Mountain*, and the piano suite *Pictures at an Exhibition* have stood the test of time. Although *Boris* and *St. John's Night* are most often heard in Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov's "corrected" form, they now are considered among the highlights of Russian music. Mussorgsky was a member of the "Mighty Five" – together with Mily Balakirev, Aleksander Borodin, Cesar Cui and Rimsky-Korsakov – whose goal was to further the pan-Slavic movement and Russian nationalist music.

In July 1873 Mussorgsky's close friend, the young architect and painter Victor Hartmann, died suddenly. The following year a posthumous showing of his drawings, paintings, and designs was presented in St. Petersburg. The fantastic and bizarre elements of much of Hartmann's work fascinated Mussorgsky, who set out to create a musical memorial to his friend in the form of a suite of piano pieces. He depicted his impressions of ten of the pictures, portraying himself as the observer in the Promenade that introduces the work and serves as connector between the tableaux.

A surprising aspect of the suite is the nearly complete absence of any subjective emotion in a work directly inspired by a great personal loss. Mussorgsky gives us his personal impressions of Hartmann's art, but rarely of his feelings about Hartmann's death; the *Catacombs* and *De mortuis* tableaux are more spooky than mournful. Even in the Promenade, strolling from picture to picture, he portrays a cool, objective viewer rather than a grieving friend.

One of the most striking features of the *Pictures* is the vivid tone painting that enables the listener to actually visualize each work of art. And it's a good thing, too, since the originals of some of Hartmann's works upon which the suite is based are lost – or perhaps never existed.

Most listeners are familiar with the orchestrated version by Maurice Ravel, but several other composers and conductors tried their hand at orchestral arrangements. And although the work has rightfully inspired orchestration, the original version for piano offers a fascinating re-evaluation.

In addition to the "Promenade," the pictures that inspired the ten tableaux of the suite are:

1. The Gnome – a sketch of a little gnome on crooked legs, said to be a design for a nutcracker.
2. *Il vecchio castello* (The Old Castle)– a medieval castle before which a troubadour sings a love song.
3. *Tuileries* (Children's Quarrel after Games) – children quarreling and nurses shouting on a path in the Tuileries garden in Paris.
4. Cattle – A Polish oxcart with enormous wheels is heard in the distance as it approaches, passes, and gradually disappears again.
5. Ballet of Unhatched Chicks – a design for a scene from the ballet, *Trilby*, the music imitates the pecking of the birds.
6. Two Polish Jews, One Rich, the Other Poor ("Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle") – No picture by Hartmann corresponding to this tableau has ever been found. The subtitle "Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle" is a late addition, not by Mussorgsky.
7. Limoges. The Market (The Great News) – French women haggling violently in the market.
8. Catacombs (Roman Tomb) – A sudden, grim shift of mood transports the listener to a picture of the catacombs in Paris illuminated by lantern light with the figure of Hartmann himself in the shadows.
- 8a. "*Cum mortuis in lingua mortua*" ("With the Dead in a Dead Language") – the Promenade, in the minor mode, constitutes the second part of *Catacombs*.
9. The Hut on Hen's Legs – Baba Yaga, the hideous old crone of Russian folklore, who lives in a hut supported on fowl legs and flies around in an iron mortar, was Hartmann's design for the face of a clock.
10. The Bogatyr Gates (In the Capital in Kiev) – Hartmann's design for a memorial gate in Kiev in honor of Tsar Alexander II. The design is in the massive Old Russian style, topped by a cupola in the shape of the helmet of the old Slavonic warriors. It is worth noting here that Mussorgsky was forced to write the sound of the bells in two huge successive chords, whereas all orchestrators of the work have been able to use the multiple instruments to sound as a single toll of the bell.

Program notes by Joseph & Elizabeth Kahn

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