

The D'Angelo Department of Music
at
Mercyhurst University

presents

Faculty Recital

Nathan Hess, piano

Walker Recital Hall

Wednesday, November 20, 2024
8:00pm



MERCYHURST
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D'ANGELO DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

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NOTES

Sonata in B-flat Major, K. 333 **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

Mozart's genius flows throughout the large body of works for keyboard, with the sonatas and concerti ranking as some of the best in his entire output. In the sonatas, taste and refinement reign supreme in the clarity of texture and the perfect balance of phrase structure. Melodies are always pleasing, simply devised, and easily remembered but always beautiful. Functional, diatonic harmony is the rule, and Mozart's love for opera is always present in the works' lyricism and expressiveness, especially in the slow movements.

The Sonata in B-flat Major, K. 333, is one of Mozart's most representative sonatas, along with the C Minor, K. 457, and the last two sonatas in B-flat and D (K. 570 and K. 576). The lyrical first movement shows standard sonata-allegro form with all themes and transitions in the correct place. The development begins in the dominant, F Major, but soon shifts to the parallel minor, signaling a sense of real urgency with left-hand sixteenths and a syncopated line in the right hand that doesn't let up until the recapitulation. The *Andante cantabile* second movement in E-flat is akin to a wind serenade (Mozart wrote several wind serenades), with the opening theme sounding like a duet for two clarinets, followed by a repeated-note idea that could be played by two oboes over a bassoon accompaniment. The middle section starts with a startlingly diminished chord that transforms the music's character into a dream-like state—a sequential melody unfolds through several beautiful harmonies before returning to the first theme. This is one of Mozart's most expressive slow movements. The third movement, a Rondo, is one of his more well-crafted rondos found in the keyboard works. This is Mozart at his best. A graceful, light-hearted theme pervades, with a contrasting middle section in G Minor. As the movement progresses it assumes more and more the character of a concerto movement: Mozart halts the action by inserting a grandiose cadenza, similar to one found in his piano concerti. Following this, the playful coda

winds the piece down before three sudden chords bring it to a joyful and decisive end.

More individual than the waltzes are those dances that relate to **Frédéric Chopin's native Poland: the mazurkas**. Chopin began composing the first of his sixty mazurkas for piano as early as the mid 1820s. The mazurkas show remarkable creativity and variety and are great examples of Chopin's harmonic innovation. Liszt called these miniature tone poems "imperious, fantastic, and impulsive."

Chopin employed many different forms in these works, with no particular one predominating. While some of the earlier mazurkas show the simple three-part form (the mazurka proper and its trio), others do not. A mazurka is sectional, with repetition of sections an important aspect; usually three of four sections that contrast in key, thematic material, and character are repeated in various combinations. Originally mazurkas were often sung to the accompaniment of a *dudy*, a form of bagpipe, which produced a drone bass. Chopin frequently featured this aspect in his own mazurkas.

Named for the Mazur people of Mazovia, mazurkas can be classified as one of three types: the *kujawiak*, a slow and serious dance named after the Kujawy region; the *mazur*, a dance in moderate tempo; and the *obertas*, a dance in a fast tempo. An example of the *kujawiak* is the deeply poignant A Minor Mazurka, Op.17, No. 4. Its slow tempo, nocturne-like embellishments, chromaticism, and its minor mode with raised fourth scale degree are all features of this type. Most Chopin's mazurkas are of the *mazur* type, such as the A-flat Major, Op. 59, No. 2, performed tonight. Now dotted rhythms and wider leaps replace the embellishments of the *kujawiak* type. Often there are irregular accents, especially at the ends of phrases and on second or third beats. We still see multiple sections here, contrasting in key, and then repeated with slight variations in melody and harmony.

Chopin's Prelude in C-Sharp Minor, Op. 45 (1841), is a stand-alone work separate from the set of 24 Preludes of Op. 28. A true

masterpiece, its character is one of improvisation, meandering through several tonalities. Composed in Nohant, France in 1841, Chopin sent the piece to his copyist with a note saying, “It is well-modulated, isn’t it?” In this constant stream of modulations, with no obvious form, the main motive and the left-hand accompaniment are intertwined. The key itself, c-sharp minor, was often used by composers as a symbol of tragedy and pathos, and this prelude is no exception. The musical yearning and expressiveness are constantly spun out to the listener in a tapestry of colors. Near the end, Chopin brings the piece to halt and inserts a cadenza with double notes in both hands—a chromatic, ethereal diversion down and up the keyboard, ending on an unstable, forte c-sharp minor chord in second inversion. The coda explores the Neapolitan harmony before resting on the home tonic of c-sharp minor.

Sonata No. 1, Op. 22

Alberto Ginastera

The Piano Sonata No. 1 by Argentinean composer Alberto Ginastera is a staple of the twentieth-century repertoire. It was premiered on November 29, 1952, in Pittsburgh, PA. Ginastera was commissioned by the Carnegie Institute and the Pennsylvania College for Women to write a piano sonata for the Pittsburgh International Contemporary Music Festival. The performance was given by pianist Johana Harris, wife of American composer Roy Harris, and the work was dedicated to both Harris. Ginastera developed a personal style that combines certain nationalistic traits with advanced contemporary techniques, namely exploiting the percussive nature of the piano. Ginastera’s intention for the piece was to capture the spirit of Argentine folk music without relying on explicit quotations from existing folk songs.

The first movement, *Allegro marcato*, shows changing meters, contrasted textures, and great motor excitement. The second movement, *presto misterioso*, is freely built around a 12-tone row and in rondo form. Ginastera effectively incorporates unison writing and varied use of touch and pedal techniques. The intensely expressive third movement, *adagio molto appassionato*,

opens with six notes recalling the open strings of the guitar. The movement builds up tension to a huge climax, complete with *fortissimo* chords and flourishes that span the entire length of the keyboard. The fourth movement—an excellent example of Ginastera's primitive, rhythmic and motoric energy—is reminiscent of Prokofiev's toccata writing. Here the rhythmic drive of the *malambo* is emphasized. Nineteenth-century gauchos—the Argentinean equivalent of the American cowboy—would dance the *malambo* (a vigorous tap dance) to prove their dancing prowess. Virtuoso octave and alternating-hand passages abound, spanning the entire length of the keyboard and driving relentlessly to a climactic close.

BIOGRAPHY

Nathan Hess has soloed with the Manassas Symphony Orchestra, Erie Philharmonic, Erie Chamber Orchestra, Western New York Chamber Orchestra, and York Symphony Orchestra, among others. Recent guest recital appearances and masterclasses have included the American Liszt Society Festival; The Americas Society in New York City; College Music Society Northeast Regional Conference; The Second Sunday Recital Series in Binghamton, NY; Bowling Green State University; Duke University; University of Wisconsin Eau Claire; Randolph College; and Duquesne University. Hess holds the Doctor of Musical Arts and Master of Music degrees from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, and the Bachelor of Music degree from James Madison University. For five years Hess chaired the piano program at the Pennsylvania Governor's School for the Arts in Erie, teaching piano to some of the state's most talented pre-college students. He performed in and produced a set of recordings for the textbook *Harmony in Context*, published by McGraw-Hill and written by Miguel Roig-Francoli. In addition to teaching and performing, Dr. Hess is active in Music Teachers National Association and adjudicates frequently throughout the region and East Coast. Dr. Hess is Associate Professor of Piano in the D'Angelo Department of Music, where he served as department chair from 2015 to 2023. He coordinates the piano area, the Faculty Recital Series, and the Roche Guest Artist Series. In 2018 he received an award for excellence in faculty scholarship. For nine summers he taught on the faculty at Rocky Ridge Music Center in Estes Park, Colorado. He can be heard on the Centaur label in a recording with flutist Susan Royal and in a recording of Bach arias produced by the International Trumpet Guild.

Upcoming Events Fall 2024

SENIOR RECITAL

Kole Wentling, clarinet

Sunday, November 24, 4:00 pm

Walker Recital Hall

Free and open to the public, livestreamed

SMALL ENSEMBLES CONCERT

Wednesday, December 4, 7:00 pm

Walker Recital Hall

Free and open to the public, livestreamed

'TIS THE SEASON

Collaboration of the D'Angelo Jazz Ensemble, Dr. Scott Meier, and the Mercyhurst Dance Department, Noelle Partusch, chair

Friday, December 6, 2024, 7:00 pm

Saturday, December 7, 2023, 11:00 am and 7:00 pm

Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center

Ticketed event: please see miac.universitytickets.com

Adults: \$15 | Seniors: \$10 | Students: \$7.50 | Youth: \$5 | Mercyhurst Students: \$5

CHRISTMAS GALA*

Sunday, December 8, 3:00-4:00pm

Lessons and Carols

Christ the King Chapel

Free admission; Donations gratefully accepted at the door

Concert Choir, Dr. Christopher Petit, director

Sunday, December 8, 4:30-5:30pm*

Holiday Concert Celebration

Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center

Wind Ensemble & the Mercyhurst Civic Orchestra

Dr. Scott Meier and Dr. Gary Viebranz, directors

*Ticketed event: please see miac.universitytickets.com

*General admission \$8.50; Mercyhurst students, faculty, & 12 & under \$5. Each ticket is subject to a \$1.50 service fee.

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