

The Ph.D./D.M.A. Programs in Music

December 6, 2022 6:00 p.m.

Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall



Yuval Shapira, piano

Estantpes ("Prints") (1903)

Pagodes ("Pagodas")

La soirée dans Grenade ("Evening in Granada")

Jardins sous la pluie ("Gardens in the Rain")

Claude Debussy
(1862–1918)

Piano Sonata in B-flat Major, Op. 22 (1800)

Allegro con brio

Adagio con molto espressione

Minuetto

Rondo: Allegretto

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770–1827)

INTERMISSION

Partita No. 1 in B-flat Major, BWV 825 (1726)

Praeludium

Allemande

Corrente

Sarabande

Menuet 1 & 2

Giga

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685–1750)

Scherzo No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 31 (1837)

Frédéric Chopin
(1810–1849)

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the D.M.A. degree.
Please switch off your cell phones and refrain from taking flash pictures.

Notes on the Program

“When you don't have any money to go on holiday, you must make do by using your imagination,” **Debussy** wrote jokingly to André Messager, reporting of the completion of *Estampes*. Using the imagination, the suite paints three musical pictures of different locations in the world: East Asia, Spain, and lastly, back home to France. *Estampes* was composed in 1903, and first performed at the *Société Nationale de Musique* in Paris by pianist Ricardo Viñes, who premiered many of Debussy's piano works.

Debussy first encountered the music of East Asia at the 1889 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris. He spent hours listening to Javanese Gamelan, and was enchanted by the sounds, rhythms, and complex counterpoint “beside which Palestrina's is child's play.” In *Pagodes*, the piano imitates the gamelan's bells and gongs, its unique scales, its complex layering of melodies, and its characteristic contrasting of soft and loud styles of playing.

Spanish composer Manuel de Falla said of *La soirée dans Grenade*: “The intense feeling of Spain crystallized in *La soirée dans Grenade* is something of a miracle if one considers that it was written by a foreigner... There is not even one measure of this music borrowed from the Spanish folklore, and yet the entire composition in its most minute details conveys Spain.” The piece uses the habanera rhythm, popularized by Bizet in *Carmen*, and incorporates elements of *cante jondo* (“deep singing”) and flamenco traditional guitar playing.

The vivid, imaginative depiction of a rainstorm in the toccata-like *Jardins sous la pluie* ranges from a gentle drizzle to violent gushes of wind and splashes of water. Two French folksongs are quoted in the piece, *Nous n'irons plus aux bois* (“We'll Not Return to the Woods”) and *Dodo, l'enfant do* (“Sleep, Child, Sleep”), keeping the atmosphere light and joyful despite the bad weather.

Composed in 1800, the **Sonata Op. 22** represents the peak of **Beethoven's** early-period sonata writing, displaying his fully developed technique in the classical tradition of Haydn and Mozart. Three of the sonata's movements (the first, second, and fourth) are composed in the conventional sonata form, or some variation thereof. In contrast, Beethoven's next piano sonata, Op. 26, has no movement in this form, suggesting the beginning of a new era of more daring experimentation. The first movement, as its title suggests, is virtuosic and brilliant. It sets off with a “revving up” gesture, reminiscent of a snare drum, rocketing upward into the main theme. The Sonata-form's exposition closes with a fanfare theme in double octaves. The development section combines the exposition's opening and closing ideas and ends with a mysterious appearance of the fanfare theme in *pianissimo*, low in the bass. The second movement resembles an Italian aria in its steady accompaniment and rich, embellished melody. The third movement features contrasting elements: The light-hearted *Minuetto* has the simplicity of a *Ländler*; the contrasting middle section, labeled *Minore*, is an eruption of demonic terror. The finale is in rondo-sonata form, where the melodious refrain returns in increasingly more embellished variations.

Bach's six keyboard partitas were published in 1731 as his Opus 1 under the title “*Clavier Übung* (Keyboard Practice), consisting of Preludes, Allemandes, Courantes, Sarabandes, Giges, Minuets, and other *galanteries*; composed for music lovers to delight their spirits.” As is implied by this title, Bach was targeting an audience based in the newly emerging middle class, thirsty for cultural activities and entertainment. Thus, the reference to “practice” (a nod to the *Clavier Übung* of Johann Kuhnau, Bach's predecessor) suggests a pedagogical aspect aimed at cultivated amateurs. While dance

suites in the baroque are generally associated with France and the French style, Bach's are influenced by Italian traditions just as well, and indeed represent a mixed international style.

The *Praeludium* is composed in the manner of a 3-part sinfonia. It has an optimistic, peaceful atmosphere and *cantabile* character which sets the tone for the entire partita. It opens with an expansive motion up the B flat major scale, something that is echoed in later movements of the partita. The *Allemande* is composed in the characteristic *style brisé* (broken style), which connotes the lute by using an arpeggiated texture. The *Corrente* is an Italian relative of the more common French *Courante*. It is a fast and spirited dance in triple meter, unlike the slower and more rhythmically complex *Courante*. The *Sarabande* is a slow and tender dance in 3/4 time, in which the second beat is frequently emphasized. The typical dance rhythm of the *Sarabande* is present throughout, though it is often obscured by the elaborate melodic embellishments. *Menuet 1* is a relatively active menuet, full of hidden polyphony and dissonances, while *Menuet 2* is simpler in nature, with its use of a pedal point, its small dimensions, and the symmetrical phrase structure. Lastly, the *Giga* is a virtuosic display based on hand crossing.

The Italian word **Scherzo** is derived from the German *Scherzen* – to joke. The scherzos of the classical period, especially Haydn and Beethoven, are usually used as replacement for a minuet in multi-movement works. They are characterized by a fast tempo, triple meter, a three-part form (ABA), and a humorous character (though sometimes wry). In **Chopin's** hands, the scherzo is a large-scale stand-alone piece, and far from comic; if any humor can be found, it is sarcastic and dark. In Robert Schumann's words: "How is gravity to clothe itself if humor wears such dark veils?" The only characteristics of the classical scherzo that Chopin maintains are the fast tempo, the 3/4 meter, and the ABA form.

The second scherzo (written in 1837) is full of sharp contrasts and sudden changes. The opening presents an ominous gesture in the middle register of the piano, quiet and suspenseful, suddenly interrupted by a loud explosion in the extreme low and high registers. Wilhelm von Lenz, who took lessons with Chopin, recalled the composer saying of this opening that "it must be a question... it must be a house of the dead." The contrasting middle section begins with a solemn and peaceful theme in A major, interposed with a *sicilienne* motive. It transitions into a doleful waltz, which eventually grows into an outburst of horror and tragic suffering. After a return to the opening section, the piece concludes with a triumphant and powerful coda.

About the Artist

Yuval Shapira is a pianist, music theorist, and award-winning composer for theater. He has performed as a soloist with major orchestras in Israel, such as the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, the Israel Sinfonietta Beer-Sheva, and the Haifa Symphony Orchestra. Shapira is the recipient of various awards and prizes in multiple musical disciplines, among them the Jerusalem Academy Concerto and Chamber Music Competitions, the Padre Martini Fugue Competition, and the Salzer Techniques of Music Award. Shapira is a DMA candidate at the CUNY Graduate Center. His dissertation, *Voice Leading in Fugue*, is an analytical study of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* fugues. Among his teachers are Richard Goode, Arie Vardi and Benjamin Oren. In addition to his piano concentration, he obtained a master's degree in music theory with honors from Mannes College where he is a member of the music theory faculty. Shapira has composed, arranged, and performed for numerous prize-winning theater productions in Israel.