

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

May 3, 2023 6:00 p.m.

Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall



Mizuho Yoshimune, piano

Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue in D Minor, BWV 903 (1720) J. S. Bach
(1685–1750)

Sonata No. 31 in A-flat Major, Op. 110 (1821) Ludwig van Beethoven
Moderato cantabile molto espressivo (1770–1827)
Allegro molto
Adagio ma non troppo – Allegro ma non troppo

INTERMISSION

Astor Place (2016) Sato Matsui
Strut (b. 1991)
Ennui
Espresso

Sonata No. 2 in G-sharp Minor, Op.19 (1897) Alexander Scriabin
Andante (1871–1915)
Presto

Scherzo No. 4 in E Major, Op. 54 (1842) Frédéric Chopin
(1810–49)

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

J.S. Bach composed his **Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue in D Minor, BWV 903** around 1720 during his years in Köthen, Germany where he was the Kapellmeister for Prince Leopold von Anhalt-Köthen. Originally written for the harpsichord, the *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue* was, and remains, one of the most harmonically unconventional and daring works in Bach's oeuvre. As a keyboard genre that is free in form and rooted in improvisation, the fantasy opens with electrifying toccata-like virtuosity and florid passagework. Chordal arpeggiations, an element particularly characteristic to harpsichord writing, are also featured dramatically as they run up and down above a surprising bass line that adds richness and texture to the bold harmonic colors. These sweepingly rich arpeggiations, highly improvisatory in nature, gradually ease into the second section of the fantasy: the *Recitativo*. Originating from the ancient Greek tradition of rhetoric and oration and later becoming highly influential in Renaissance and Baroque vocal and instrumental performance, the *Recitativo* evokes the vocal imitation of human speech and the art of persuasion. Shocking harmonies interject and heighten the emotional tension in the *Recitativo* as well, creating an unpredictable harmonic trajectory through the freely declamatory style. A lament of successive diminished sevenths descending chromatically above a tonic pedal concludes the fantasy as the oration is brought to a close.

Equally unusual as the fantasy, the fugue subject is built upon a four-note chromatic ascent. Beginning in strict style, three-voice fugue gradually builds in virtuosity as elements from the fantasy are re-introduced, including the chordal arpeggiations that now dramatically embellish the fugal subject. Pedal tones as well as doubled octave basses resembling the deep resonance of the organ heighten the emotional tension and gravity, before the fugue is concluded in the key of the relative major, D major. The harmonic boldness, emotional depth, and virtuosity of this daring work is a testament to Bach's mastery of both improvisation and the art of fugue.

Ludwig van Beethoven composed his last three piano sonatas (Opp. 109, 110, and 111) between 1820 and 1822, years in which he wrote some of his most emotionally gripping works. The completion of his **Piano Sonata No. 31 in A-flat Major, Op.110** in 1821 followed a particularly long period of illness as well as his work on the *Missa Solemnis*. The resulting sonata is one that takes both the performer and the listener on a powerful emotional journey ranging from loving warmth, jest, the darkest despair, to ultimately life-affirming exaltation. Given the sheer depth and richness of expression, it is also remarkably concise in form — devoid are all filigree, leaving only the rawness of the human experience conveyed through the music.

The first movement, *Moderato cantabile molto espressivo*, begins in A-flat major in the style of a four-voice chorale. Marked *con amabilità* and emitting loving warmth, the opening intervallic fall of a third followed by a leap of a fourth will also later become the material on which the fugue of the monumental third movement will be built upon. The exposition tenderly flows with gently cascading arpeggiations and a germinating buildup of energy, before ominously hollowing out to the unusually brief development section lasting only fifteen measures and based on a startlingly simple melody exploring the first subject. In a Beethovenian manner, the recapitulation is also rich with tonal surprises, as the second theme arrives in not the tonic A-flat major, but in the subdominant D-flat major before moving into the distant key of E major. Though the movement ends with the reassuring tonic A-flat major, the gentle movement already shows Beethoven's remolding of traditional structure and expectations, with more to come as the sonata progresses.

In a stark contrast to the preceding movement, the second movement, *Allegro molto*, is a scherzo in F minor based on two popular German folk songs of the time. Commonly heard in the beer taverns of Vienna at the time, the tunes began with the following texts with the melodic and rhythmic inflections reflecting the words: “*Unser Katz hat Kätzge gehabt*” (“Our cat has had kittens”) and “*Ich bin lüderlich, du bist lüderlich, wir sind alle lüderlich*” (“I am dissolute, you are dissolute, all of us are dissolute”). The trio section launches into cascading descents offset by strongly accented syncopation, before ending quietly as the scherzo begins once again. The jesting scherzo eventually dissolves into a wisp of F major harmony, leading into a silence before the gravity of the final movement begins.

The final movement, *Adagio ma non troppo—Allegro ma non troppo*, is an exploration of both extreme ends of the human emotional spectrum — from the abyss of grief and despair to the highest exaltation and life-affirming joy. Beginning in haunting B-flat minor, the movement delves into a journey of recitatives, laments, and fugues in succession. Beethoven, who deeply revered J.S. Bach, resurrects the Baroque style as well as Baroque rhetoric and *affekt* through the “*Klagender Gesang*,” for which Beethoven uses the theme from the “*Es ist vollbracht*” aria of Bach’s *St. John Passion*. The emotional intensity is expressed so vividly through both the deeply lamenting melody under which the chordal colors subtly shift, and so often seems to be just within reach of arriving at a hopeful place — but only to have the rug pulled out from underneath and sinking down again to defeated disappointment. The final notes of the first lament also fittingly accompanies the words “*es ist vollbracht*” (“it is finished”), before the first fugue begins based on the opening motif of the first movement. The musical landscape changes once again with the hopes that it will lead to a more promising destination — however, such hopes are again erased as the second lament arrives with a descending G minor arpeggiation into “*Ernattet, klagend: perdendo le forze, dolente.*” Now utterly defeated, the lament is interspersed with sixteenth rests, as the melody fragments and breaks down into sobs.

Refusing to give up is strongly reflective of how Beethoven lived and is powerfully reflected in the final fugue, marked “*poi a poi di nuovo vivente*” (“little by little with renewed vigor, coming back to life”). Just as all hope seems to be lost, a soft whisper of a hopeful G major peers out and repeats successively greater in energy. The inversion of the first fugue is heard from a far distance as it signals the beginning of the second fugue and Beethoven’s masterful craft of fugal counterpoint, augmentation, and diminution come together leading into the final celebratory chorale. With two final upward straining of the fugal subject, the movement and the epic journey comes to a triumphant arrival as the tonic A-flat is affirmed through arpeggiation spanning the entire range of the keyboard, before landing on the massive final tonic chord. The life-affirming joy, which can only come out of the darkest depths of despair, reaches into the sublime that encompasses Beethoven’s ultimate hope for humanity.

As “The City That Never Sleeps,” New York City is one of the most diverse and vibrant cosmopolitan cities in the world. With a rich and colorful history as a metropolis, the streets and communities of NYC are also brimming with their own stories and metamorphoses. Astor Place is one of them and is the name of a one-block street in lower Manhattan in the East Village. Originally named after the Astor family — one of the prominent families in business, politics, and the social scene in the U.S. in the 19th and 20th centuries — Astor Place was originally home to some of the wealthiest people in the country including the Astor, Vanderbilt, and Delano families in the late 1800s. This early affluence of the neighborhood eventually underwent a major transformation by the turn of the century as industrialization brought the neighborhood to disintegration before being revitalized in the 1960s. By the 1980s it had become a hub for punk rockers, with small music stores and bookstores arriving in the 1990s that sold vinyl and CDs alongside open-air markets.

Today, Astor Place is home to a young and vibrant artistic community as well as a large university student population. Skateboarders zoom by the streets as young people often gather by the Astor Place Cube, and colorful mosaic tiles decorate the lampposts, giving the neighborhood a potpourri of energy and stories of the lives of the people who walk these streets.

Japanese-French composer **Sato Matsui** (b.1991), who grew up in the U.S. as well as having spent several years living in NYC, composed *Astor Place* (2016) as an encapsulation of the energy of this vibrant neighborhood and Astor Place as we know it today. Matsui writes the following about *Astor Place*:

Three contrasting sketches capture one late night in Astor Place. Here in New York's East Village, colors seem more vivid by night and thoughts wilder than in daytime.

The opening sketch, *Strut*, intermingles the vibrant, confident energy of the city with the colors and rhythms of jazz. With the time signature changing nearly every bar, the piece captures the boundless vitality of NYC while weaving seamlessly between the energies of day and night, flowing between the upbeat "strut" and the suave *debonaire*, and back to the confident dynamism of "strut." *Ennuï*, the second sketch, captures the moments in which time slows down even amid the bustling city, drifting between a languid flow, daydreaming, and wistfulness. The last sketch, *Espresso*, jolts us back to the electrifying energy of the city, as frequent meter changes return while accented pointillistic rhythms intermingle with a germinating motif that expands by one beat with each occurrence. Together, the three distinct sketches avidly capture the exuberance, reveries, and hopes and dreams of the lives of people living in "The City That Never Sleeps."

Alexander Scriabin and his fascination with the ocean and the coloristic association with musical keys already begins in his early works, including his **Sonata No. 2 in G-sharp Minor, Op.19** ("Sonata-Fantasy"). Composed over a lengthy period from 1892-97, his initial inspiration for the work began in his early twenties while on a visit to the Baltic coast, from which his encounter with the Baltic Ocean left such a deep impression on him that it would soon become the central influence of his second piano sonata. Already keenly attentive to the nuance of colors as a synesthetic, Scriabin's compositions would soon become a musical expression of the visual perceptions of nature and their inseparable connection to sound and harmony. Scriabin would later include his own notes on the second sonata upon its publication in 1897, in which he described the work as:

The first movement represents the quiet of a southern night on the seashore; the development is the dark agitations of the deep, deep sea. The E-major middle section shows caressing moonlight coming after the first darkness of the night. The second movement, *Presto*, represents the vast expanse of ocean stormily agitated.

Scriabin would later develop the *clavier à lumières* for his 1910 composition, *Prometheus: Poem of Fire*, in which the key of E major would be indicated as a cool, sky-blue color.

Scriabin's Sonata No. 2 in G-sharp Minor, Op.19 is a two-movement work, that builds on the legacy Beethoven left behind of beginning a sonata with a slow movement with his "Moonlight" Sonata. The first movement, *Andante*, features an exposition, development, and recapitulation that all begin with the same opening motif of the work that is also a rhythmic reversal of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, albeit in a drastically different, more introspective, and ethereal character. Soaring, *bel canto* vocal melodies that are marked *ben marcato il canto* continue the Romantic traditions of Chopin and Liszt, while depicting the luxuriously flowing waves of the ocean with delicate filigree surrounding them,

creating a sparkling and luminescent sonority. As classmates with Rachmaninoff at the Moscow Conservatory, similar stylistic elements appear in the dramatic development as thick chordal textures heighten the ocean's agitation as the opening motif rings insistently amid the powerful surging waves. The recapitulation returns the ocean back to the calmness and scintillating waves, now in E major. The opening motif returns once more at the end of the movement as one last luminating sparkle under the moonlight, as the calm before the storm.

The *Presto* second movement is the ocean at its most agitated and powerful, as the *molto perpetuo* rhythm above frequent crescendos and diminuendos evoke the restless, rapid waves. No longer the luminating, sparkling nature of the waves from the *Andante* movement, the ocean now takes a more ominous and ferocious character through perpetual triplet rhythms, chromaticism, and rapidly undulating phrases. Fragments of the melody appear amidst the whirling waves in the left hand, each time never quite reaching completion as the agitation of the ocean takes over. Underneath the *molto perpetuo* is an undeniable tension of the ocean waves' strength, that finally culminates in the colossal climax reaching insistently upwards chromatically as the melody finally reaches completion at the end of the movement.

Scherzo No.4 in E Major, Op.54 is the last of the set of four scherzi by **Frédéric Chopin**. Composed in the summer of 1842 while at the estate of Aurore Dupin (known publicly as George Sand) in Nohant, France, it was written during a personally peaceful time for Chopin as many of their artist friends including the painter Eugène Delacroix and singer Pauline Viardot visited Chopin and Sand over the summer months. In a contrast to the preceding three scherzi that are all in darker minor keys, the use of a major key sets this E major scherzo apart from the rest, in addition to the capricious nature of the work. Elusive and sparkling in tone and color, the E major scherzo often evokes the fairytale world of a Mendelssohn scherzo from *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Composed in a ternary form (ABA), the opening A section threads together whimsical musical ideas of a range of tonal colors, with each idea materializing only to disappear out of sight. Not limited to the jocular, elusive, and fantastical characters, Chopin's deep pride in his Polish roots is also expressed as hints of the Polish noble aristocratic character are also intermingled amid the mercurial thread of ideas. The *più lento* trio section in c-sharp minor is a lyrical contrast to the two surrounding jesting and elusive A sections as a singular melodic voice is joined by second, forming a duet. The subsequent A section brings a more dramatic return of the opening section, while still intermingled with the mercurial, jesting character of the scherzo. A brief, scintillating Mendelssohn-esque scherzo transitions into the final coda, bringing the piece to a majestic and triumphant ending.

About the Artist

Born and raised in New York, Japanese-American pianist **Mizuho Yoshimune** has won top prizes at competitions including the New York Piano Festival & Competition, Lillian Fuchs Chamber Music Competition, Rosalyn Tureck International Bach Competition, Bronx Arts Ensemble Young Artist Competition, and the New York Music Competition. She has performed at venues in the U.S. and abroad, including Carnegie Hall, Merkin Concert Hall, Steinway Hall, Greenfield Hall, Maiori Town Hall in Italy, and Evens Hall in Israel.

Ms. Yoshimune has performed in festivals such as the Tel-Hai International Piano Master Classes in Israel, the International Keyboard Institute & Festival in New York City, and the Virtuoso & Bel Canto Festival and Amalfi Coast Music & Arts Festival in Italy. She has performed in numerous master classes including by Dmitri Bashkirov, Tatiana Zelikman, Alexander Kobrin, Emanuel Krasovsky, Alon Goldstein, Asaf Zohar, Matti Raekallio, Boris Berman and Akiko Ebi. Ms. Yoshimune's performances have been broadcasted on *Roim Olam* in Israel and *News 12: The Bronx* in New York.

Ms. Yoshimune earned her B.A. in Economics from Yale University, where she also studied the piano with Melvin Chen at the Yale School of Music. At Yale, she was the recipient of a number of scholarships, including the John Gaffney Scholarship for aspiring professional musicians, the Governor's Committee Scholarship, and was also the Yale Club of New York's Charlie Guggenheimer Scholar. Ms. Yoshimune recently earned her Master of Music degree from the Manhattan School of Music, where she studied with André-Michel Schub and was also the recipient of the Cirio Foundation Scholarship. Ms. Yoshimune is currently pursuing her D.M.A. in Piano Performance at the CUNY Graduate Center in New York City, where she is studying with Thomas Sauer.