

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

April 17, 2024 6:00 p.m.

Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall



Nenad Ivović, piano

Moments Musicaux, D. 780 (1823-28)

Moderato

Andantino

Allegro moderato

Moderato

Allegro vivace

Allegretto

Franz Schubert
(1797–1828)

Il Circo (2002)

Isidora Žebeljan
(1967–2020)

INTERMISSION

Piano Sonata No. 2 in F-sharp Minor, Op. 2 (1852-53)

Allegro non troppo, ma energico

Andante con espressione

Scherzo: Allegro - Poco piu moderato

Finale: Sostenuto - Allegro non troppo e rubato - Molto sostenuto

Johannes Brahms
(1833–97)

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

Franz Schubert (1797-1828) – *Moments Musicaux*, D. 780

Composed between 1823 and 1828 and published in 1828, the Six *Moments Musicaux* (“musical moments”) represent some of Schubert’s most cherished piano compositions. Crafted to meet Vienna’s demand for short, intimate piano pieces, these miniatures provide a profound glimpse into Schubert’s intricate emotional landscape, demonstrating his remarkable ability to evoke a spectrum of feelings within compact musical structures.

It is highly probable that Schubert himself performed these pieces at informal musical gatherings with his friends, often referred to as *Schubertiade*. While brief, they are imbued with rich character, showcasing Schubert’s diverse range of emotions, reflecting the paradoxical nature of his life. From moments of profound introspection and melancholy, to burst of joy and optimism, these pieces encapsulate the wonder of human nature.

While the name “*Moments Musicaux*” suggests a sense of spontaneity, these pieces, like Schubert’s piano sonatas and Impromptus, are meticulously structured (often following ABA/Ternary form). However, Schubert’s audacious use of harmony, coupled with unexpected modulations and a dynamically shifting palette, disrupts the traditional continuity of form, resulting in music that is profoundly intense, dramatic, and emotionally stirring. Even in their grandeur, these compositions maintain an intimate, almost confessional quality, exuding a sense of privacy and mystery. Within the apparent simplicity of these six sublime musical pieces, lies a kaleidoscope of fleeting yet profound emotions.

Moderato

The initial Musical Moment, in C major, begins with a charming pastoral fanfare, quickly transitioning into a more haunting atmosphere with the sudden introduction of C minor chords within just three bars. Following a ternary form, the piece includes minuet and trio sections. These harmonic shifts infuse the music with a subtle yearning, accentuated by the recurring triplets in the central section, adding a whimsical touch, even amidst the minor tonality. The seamless modulations between keys evoke deep emotional resonance, while the melodic lines convey a distinct essence reminiscent of *Lieder*.

Andantino

The second piece, composed in the serene key of A-flat major, unfolds with a structured ABABA form, with each iteration of the A section offering nuanced variations. Despite its Sicilienne rhythm, the A section brings a lullaby-like quality, accentuated by its circular structure and recurring motifs. Unexpected harmonies and poignant modulations infuse the music with a sense of dramatic intensity, leading to the B sections in F-sharp minor, which evoke profound sadness, particularly in the second instance, where the plaintive melody is intensified by accented chords. The final return of the A-flat major section brings a fleeting sense of solace, concluding the piece with a sense of contemplative tranquility.

Allegretto Moderato

The third Musical Moment, composed in the key of F minor, offers a charming contrast as a naive dance, originally introduced as an *'Air Russe'*. Standing as the shortest among the six compositions, it follows the classic ABA form with a brief Coda. Personally, its lively spirit, embellished with accents, crisp staccato passages, and delicate grace notes, evokes the imagery of lively hoofbeats resounding in the left hand, while the right hand delicately brings a rustic folk melody. The seamless interplay between minor and major tonalities further enhances the Bohemian essence of this enchanting piece.

Moderato

In another composition set in a minor key, this time in C-sharp minor, the structure maintains the ternary form observed in the preceding Musical Moment. Its introductory segment carries a *perpetuum-mobile*-like essence, characterized by a subtle, underlying melodic line in the right hand, juxtaposed with a distinct, predominantly staccato motif in the left. Despite being marked with a *Moderato* tempo indication, the opening section exudes a restless ambiance, a mood that persists upon its recurrence following the middle segment. The latter part reveals a strikingly different character, featuring punctuated rhythms in the left hand and a lullaby-like melody in the right, evoking a playful yet tranquil dance-like quality.

Allegro Vivace

The last Musical Moment composed in a minor key, introduces a notably different energy. This highly dynamic piece centers around a recurring rhythmic motif, featuring one quarter note (longer) followed by two eighth notes (shorter). Despite adhering to a ternary form structure, the middle section maintains the rhythmic pattern without alteration, while its melodic content is characterized by abrupt dynamic shifts, contributing to its cohesive nature. With its lively demeanor and pronounced vigor, this piece serves as a stark contrast to the following piece.

Allegretto

The concluding piece offers a serene closure to this cycle, characterized by its tender emotional expression and tranquil rhythmic flow. Structured in an ABA form, it predominantly explores the harmonic realms of A-flat major (A section) and D-flat major (B section). Personally, I find its lyrical quality reminiscent of compositions by Robert Schumann, such as *Kinderszenen – Der Dichter Spricht*.

Isidora Žebeljan (1967-2020) - *Il Circo*

Isidora Žebeljan was a celebrated Serbian composer, esteemed university professor, and academician. Renowned for her groundbreaking contributions to contemporary music, she emerged as one of the leading figures in Serbian music of the younger generation. A distinguished graduate of the Faculty of Music, she studied under the mentorship of Vlastimir Trajković, both at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Joining the faculty in 2002, she served as a professor of composition at the Department of Composition, leaving an indelible mark on her students and colleagues alike. Žebeljan's musical oeuvre encompasses a wide array of genres within the realm of art music, each composition bearing her distinct and captivating personal style. Her works garnered international acclaim, earning her numerous accolades and recognition across the globe. Alongside Ljubica Marić, she stood as one of the foremost Serbian female composers of the 20th and early 21st

centuries, leaving an enduring legacy in the world of music. Her passing on September 29, 2020, marked a profound loss for the global music community.

Il Circo, published in 2002, is a short piano composition that embarks on a unique auditory voyage through the ambiance of a circus spectacle, with the piano artfully imitating the mechanical sounds of the circus. This composition encapsulates a passionate melody, interjected with sudden decelerations and moments of heightened suspense, evoking a nostalgic and captivating atmosphere. Despite its fragmented nature, the piece maintains its intrinsic essence through the portrayal of a mechanical instrument performance, reminiscent of a pianola. The Italian title and a quote from Nino Rota's circus music in Federico Fellini's "8 1/2" serve as a homage to the evocative themes of nostalgia and emotional intricacy prevalent in Italian cinema.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) – Piano Sonata No.2 in F-sharp Minor

The Piano Sonata No. 2 in F-sharp Minor, composed in 1852 and published the following year alongside the first Piano Sonata in C Major, showcases Brahms's early mastery. Despite being composed before the C major Sonata, Brahms prioritized the latter for its perceived higher quality as an inaugural publication. Recommended enthusiastically to the publisher "Breitkopf und Härtel" by Robert Schumann, the F-sharp minor Sonata is dedicated to Clara Schumann. With four movements, it serves as a testament to the composer's youthful brilliance, marked by challenging technical demands, dramatic shifts in character, and an emotional depth that reflects Brahms's orchestral sensibilities translated onto the piano.

Allegro non troppo, ma energico

The opening movement, structured in sonata form, unveils with a grandiose and virtuosic character. Brahms ingeniously constructs the primary and secondary themes from the initial motif, a characteristic feature of his compositional approach, thereby unifying the piece in a cyclic work. Infused with triplet rhythms, the secondary theme imbues a touch of melancholy. Throughout the movement, Brahms masterfully balances dramatic contrasts with lyrical passages, interwoven with expansive technical challenges, leading to a climactic closure of this movement.

Andante con espressione

The second movement of the Sonata is a homage to German *Minnesang*, particularly "Mir Ist Leid". Following a theme with variations form, it revolves harmonically around B minor and B major. Unlike Sonata No.1, where Brahms prominently features the song's text, here he omits direct textual references. Transitioning from a soloistic and linear texture to a lush and expansive orchestral texture in the central section, the movement showcases Brahms's mastery of transformation and development. It seamlessly transitions into the following movement without pause.

Scherzo – Allegro / Poco piu moderato

The third movement can be viewed as a further exploration of the preceding one, featuring the same melody, but now at a brisk tempo. The central Trio section introduces a contrasting mood with a slower pace, along with a shift to the key of D major. Following a condensed restatement of the Scherzo, the movement concludes with a challenging Coda. Here, the performer faces technical challenges, executing double trills in the right hand followed by a cascading scale of expansive chords.

Finale - Introduzione. Sostenuto / Allegro non troppo e rubato / Molto sostenuto

The concluding movement of this Sonata opens with an Introduction marked by a slow tempo and a free-flowing, improvisational character. The main theme introduced in the Introduction serves as the foundation for the first theme of this movement, which follows a Sonata form structure. Despite its lively and somewhat bohemian character, distinguished by the left-hand accompaniment, the second theme shares certain melodic and intervallic characteristics with the first theme. Throughout this movement, as with the entire Sonata, Brahms employs an orchestral approach to piano writing, skillfully imitating the sounds of various orchestral instruments such as strings and brass. The concluding Coda mirrors the character of the opening Introduction, featuring a slower tempo and a sense of improvisation, ultimately leading to the Sonata's bright resolution in the major key of F sharp.

About the Artist

At the age of four, **Nenad Ivović** began his musical training at the Music School "Mokranjac" with Prof. Milica Vasiljević Bisenić. He completed his bachelor's degree with distinction at the Belgrade University of Arts under the tutelage of Prof. Nevena Popović at the age of nineteen. Nenad has received recognition for his outstanding musical abilities throughout his career, winning numerous awards at both domestic and international competitions. These include first prize at the Step Towards Mastery competition in Saint Petersburg, second prize at the Arianne Katcz competition in Tel Aviv, and third prize at the Jacob Flier competition in New York.

In 2015, Nenad earned his Master of Music Degree from Tel Aviv University while studying with Prof. Emanuel Krasovsky. He has had the honor of collaborating with renowned musicians such as Andras Schiff, Emanuel Ax, Augustin Hadelich, Dmitri Bashkirov, Emerson Quartet, Mikhail Voskresensky, Joseph Kalihstein, Alexander Toradze, and Peter Serkin, among others.

In May 2019, Nenad completed his Master of Musical Arts degree at Yale University, guided by Prof. Boris Berman. After graduation, he continued working at Yale School of Music as a Collaborative Pianist and Chamber Music coach. As of September 2022, Nenad has begun pursuing his Doctoral Degree at the City University of New York - Graduate Center, with the guidance of Prof. Julian Martin (Juilliard School).

Currently, Nenad works at Hartt School of Music (Hartford University) as a Collaborative Pianist.