

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

April 19, 2024 6:00 p.m.

*Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall*



## Mizuho Yoshimune, piano

Fantasia and Fugue in A Minor, BWV 904 (1725)

J.S. Bach  
(1685–1750)

*Bolts of Loving Thunder* (2013)

Missy Mazzoli  
(b. 1980)

Fantasy in F Minor, Op.49 (1841)

Frédéric Chopin  
(1810–49)

### INTERMISSION

Fantasy in C Major, Op.17 (1836)

Robert Schumann

*Durchaus fantastisch und leidenschaftlich vorzutragen; Im Legendenton.* (1810–56)

*Mäßig. Durchaus energisch.*

*Langsam getragen. Durchweg leise zu halten.*

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 — *Fantasia and Fugue in A Minor, BWV 904 (1725)*

In 1723, J.S. Bach (1685-1750) was appointed as the Thomaskantor in Leipzig, beginning a period in which he produced a prolific number of cantatas, as well some of his most well-known works including the *St. Matthew Passion*, the *Goldberg Variations*, and *The Art of Fugue*. The *Fantasia and Fugue in A Minor, BWV 904* was composed around 1725 during Bach's early Leipzig years, and the grandeur of both the choral setting and organ are immediately recognizable from the richly arpeggiated, luxurious texture of the opening chords. Much like the four voice sections of a choir (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass), the *Fantasia and Fugue in A Minor, BWV 904*, too, is a four-voiced fugue throughout both the *Fantasia* and the *Fugue*, as the voices ebb and flow between the richness of the full choir and the finesse of the individual voices in dialogue with one another in varying combinations.

Solemn yet stately in character, the *Fantasia* opens in a resonant, full-choir texture in a minor above a descending bass — a motif that will later become the source of the chromatic second subject in the *Fugue*. In addition to highlighting the rich sonority of the four voices simultaneously, the arpeggiated texture of the opening also reappears throughout the *Fantasia* as important harmonic structural pillars in a minor, C Major, E minor, and D minor. Suspensions permeate throughout, as subject material based on the fourth interval sustain a continuous dialogue between the voices before leading to the final culmination: the coda and the return of the stately opening, this time closing in a hopeful A Major.

The *Fugue* that follows is a double-fugue, beginning first with a lengthy subject rooted in A minor, and comprised of three sections: a stern opening statement characterized with wide intervals, followed by a tender and lyrical step-wise motif, and finally a cadential trill ending. This subject, first presented in the soprano, gradually expands to an interlocking web of four-part harmonies after each of the four voices presents the subject individually. The second subject in contrast, is a chromatically descending line that is both an embellishment of the descending bass from the earlier Fantasy, as well as a connection to another major fantasy work written several years earlier: the *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue in D Minor, BWV 903 (1720)*. Chromatically insistent and heavily descending, the second subject of *Fantasia and Fugue in A Minor, BWV 904* and its florid countersubject once again expand into a complex web of four voices. The fugue eventually culminates in the double-fugue as the first subject and second subject occur simultaneously, creating an effect of the past being recalled while the chromatic subject continues to pierce through the dense texture before ending in a stately A Major once again.

### Missy Mazzoli — *Bolts of Loving Thunder (2013)*

American composer Missy Mazzoli (b.1980) is known as one of the most versatile and inventive composers of the contemporary music scene today, as her works range from classical compositions, music for TV and film (most notably for *Mozart in the Jungle*), operas (including *Lincoln in the Bardo* that is set to premiere at the Metropolitan Opera in 2026) and more. As a student growing up in the late 90's during the same time as the early years of Bang on a Can, the borders between musical genres were more fluid — an element that runs throughout her own compositions as well, including *Bolts of Loving Thunder* for solo piano. Not limited to the classical repertoire, Mazzoli played in bands in clubs growing up and still performs as a keyboardist with Victoire, a chamber-rock quintet she founded in 2008. As a result, many of her works draws influences from various sources, including Baroque, indie rock, and pop music.

*Bolts of Loving Thunder*, as the title suggests, depicts the unpredictable ebb and flow of thunder amidst a storm. From the jolting opening, the bolts of thunder strike down from high above in the clouds as piercing high Bs, as the left hand traverses from the lowest, growling ranges of the keyboard before crossing over to the highest register. The piece is a musical embodiment of how thunder moves in reality: the moments in which it strikes, then fades away in gradual waves of sound before a distant ominous crackling can be heard seconds before the next thunder drops yet again with the great force of nature. Similarly, the perpetual undulating octaves in the middle range of the keyboard throughout the entire work depict the ebb and flow of energy surrounding a thunderstorm — persistent yet with great fluctuations, ranging from moments of ominous calm to nature’s energy at its fiercest. The changes in time signature — occurring almost every bar throughout the whole piece — also embodies the unpredictable element of nature and thunder at its core. Melodies of indeterminate rhythmic lengths hover above the rolling sounds of the inner octaves, much like the unpredictability of the flashes of thunder. Harmonic colorations change subtly, as the lack of rests in the piece (an element derived from pop music) create a vast tonal landscape shifting gradually yet continuously.

On *Bolts of Loving Thunder* and the inspirations behind the work, Mazzoli writes the following:

*Bolts of Loving Thunder* was composed in 2013 for pianist Emanuel Ax. When Manny asked me to write a piece that would appear on a program of works by Brahms, I immediately thought back to my experiences as a young pianist. I have clear memories of crashing sloppily but enthusiastically through the Rhapsodies and Intermezzi, and knew I wanted to create a work based on this romantic, stormy idea of Brahms, complete with hand crossing and dense layers of chords. I also felt that there needed to be a touch of the exuberant, floating melodies typical of young, “pre-beard” Brahms. Brahms’ “F-A-F” motive (shorthand for “frei aber froh” or “free but happy”) gradually breaks through the surface of this work, frenetically bubbling out in the final section. The title comes from a line in John Ashbery’s poem *Farm Implements and Rutabagas in a Landscape*.

— Missy Mazzoli

Brahms’ “F-A-F/frei aber froh” (“free but happy”) motif was a response to Joseph Joachim’s “F-A-E/frei aber einsam” (“free but lonely”) motif, and the “F-A-F” motif is most famously integrated in Brahms’ Symphony No.3 in F Major, Op.90. The inner passion, tenderness, and emotional fluctuations found in Brahms’ music is translated over in a contemporary setting and with associations to nature here in *Bolts of Loving Thunder*, and the piece cuts off abruptly as the ever-unpredictable thunder disappears with a final quiet flash.

### **Frédéric Chopin — Fantasy in F Minor, Op.49 (1841)**

Musical romanticism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century began as part of the larger movement of Romanticism across the arts, literature, and philosophy — holding in common with one another, the opposition to the rationalism and empiricism of the Age of Enlightenment. Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849) lived during the very midst of the Romantic movement, during which unprecedented explorations of emotional depth and range were at the beginning to be at the forefront of music from this period. The fantasy genre in instrumental music, from its earliest appearances in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, always had a history of deviating from the formal strictness to indulge in, to varying degrees, greater emotional expression and freedom. For Chopin, the fantasy genre could not be more fitting.

Chopin’s Fantasy opens with a solemn funeral march introduction set in F minor and hidden within the motifs is an allusion to ‘Litwinka’ by Karol Kurpiński, a fellow Polish composer who also contributed to the development of a national style in music of the Romantic period. Kurpiński’s

'Litwinka' was a Polish insurrectionary song that was widely known and sung by all of Poland during the November Uprising of 1830-1831. Opening with the words: “*The air blew sweet across the Polish land,*” ‘Litwinka’ was a song of hope for regaining independence as well as a song of defiance during the Polish-Russian War. Though it is not a direct quotation, the allusion of 'Litwinka' in Chopin's Fantasy nonetheless conveys a narrative centered around the themes of the struggle for independence, hope, and triumph.

As the sound of the army fades away into the distance, the opening funeral march transitions into an improvisatory passage of triplets that gradually gains momentum with *doppio movimento* before plunging into the beginning of a dramatic narrative. Five themes follow in succession one after another, morphing seamlessly from a rich operatic alto melody, a sensitive and lyrical cantilena emulating the *bel canto* style, a sweepingly ardent vocal theme, a heroic and defiant declamation, and a march — this time, a military march. The operatic *bel canto* style that Chopin adored and turned into one of his most recognizable compositional fingerprints across his oeuvre, is colored by unrestrained passion here in the Fantasy, as it melds with the narrative of heroic defiance and the struggle for independence.

The structure of Chopin's Fantasy presents an intriguing paradox: despite being a fantasy work, it is remarkably tightly structured in form. After the introductory march, the five themes that follow collectively form the A section (first presented in F minor), that will appear in transposition twice more — in C minor and B-flat minor throughout the course of the Fantasy. Linking the three presentations of the A sections are transitional passages, as well as a chorale forming the B section. Meanwhile, the overall harmonic trajectory journeys from f minor to A-flat Major — an unusual course during a period when works conventionally began and ended in the same key.

Amidst the transpositions of the passionate A sections, a luminous chorale appears seemingly out of nowhere, in the distant key of B Major. Prayer-like in sonority, the transparent texture gradually becomes richly colored with chromatic saturation, traversing through quiet reverence, poignant lament, and tender hope. The chorale ends just as unexpectedly as it began, and once more sweeps into the passionate ascending triplet transition, before the final presentation of the A section, now beginning in B-flat minor.

As a work full of harmonic and thematic surprises, the Fantasy ends with one final unexpected appearance — after cascading culmination of doubled chromatics, the stormy clouds clear and a distant shepherd's call signals the coda section. Recitative-like and once again luminous in sonority, the shepherd's call gently eases into a shimmering, final ascent in A-flat Major before ending with a decisive plagal cadence — triumphant and resolute. In a letter to Julian Fontana in October of 1841, Chopin wrote, “Today I finished the Fantasy – and the sky is beautiful, but my heart is afflicted by sorrow.” Regarded highly as one of the pinnacles of Chopin's creative mastery, the F minor Fantasy leaves a powerfully emotional resonance to this day.

### **Robert Schumann — Fantasy in C Major, Op.17 (1836)**

In a letter to Clara Wieck in March of 1838, Robert Schumann (1810-1856) wrote, “The first movement is perhaps the most impassioned music I have ever written. It is a deep lament for you.” The music Schumann was referring to, was his monumental three-movement Fantasy in C Major, Op.17 — today, widely considered as one of Schumann's greatest solo piano works as well among the masterpieces of the Romantic period. Composed during one of Schumann and Clara's forced separations by Friedrich Wieck, Clara's father who fiercely opposed their marriage, the C Major

Fantasy was a work that underwent numerous changes, just as Schumann and Clara's relationship did over the years before and after their eventual marriage in 1840.

Originally a one movement work titled *Ruins*, the piece was Schumann's expression of impassioned lament over his long separation from Clara and their uncertain future. The movement would later become the first of the three movements of the Fantasy. Simultaneously, a Beethoven monument in Bonn, Germany was being planned by Franz Liszt, and Schumann composed two more movements to contribute to raise funds for the tributary monument. Originally called the "Grand Sonata for Beethoven's Monument," the individual titles of the three movements — originally *Ruins*, *Trophies*, *Palms* — were changed to *Ruins*, *Triumphal Arch*, and *Constellation*, before being entirely replaced with simply *Fantasy* upon publication in 1839. Just as the Fantasy was originally a work with many titles, it was also a work with multiple dedications. Publicly, it was dedicated to Franz Liszt (as well as being a tribute to Beethoven), but, always the composer of musical ciphers, Schumann's references to Clara are so deeply integrated in the Fantasy that it is most profoundly a musical love letter dedicated to her.

The Fantasy is prefaced with the following quote by Friedrich Schlegel, a German poet, philosopher, and literary critic who was also a prominent figure in Romanticism in German literature:

*Durch alle Töne tönet  
Im bunten Erdentraum  
Ein leiser Ton gezogen  
Für den, der heimlich lauschet.*

"Resounding through all the notes  
In the earth's colorful dream  
There sounds a faint long-drawn note  
For the one who listens in secret."

Evoking the colorful tonal world of Schumann's imagination, the Fantasy weaves in and out between dream-like states, impulsive passion, and the contrast between the personal and the communal evocation of emotions. Throughout the vast narrative, Clara, as the "one who listens in secret" is always near in thought throughout the entirety of the Fantasy.

Opening with a whirling figuration in the left hand, the Fantasy begins already at the peak of passion, as the impassioned melody joins in with a descending five-note motif — the "Clara" theme that also appears across Schumann's other works in his oeuvre, including his Piano Concerto in a minor, Piano Sonata No.3 in F Minor, and Symphony No.4 in D Minor. As a composer of musical ciphers, the opening "Clara" motif, beginning with A and G, would later be a unifying element in the final movement as well. The first movement, indicated *Durchaus fantastisch und leidenschaftlich vorzutragen* ("Quite fantastic and passionately delivered"), fluctuates tempestuously between ardent passion and colorful dream-like sonorities. Harmonic trajectories are constantly thwarted from their expected resolutions at the last minute by a single note, effectively sustaining the large-scale harmonic tension that is caused by another major element — the lack of a pure C Major tonic until nearly three hundred measures into the movement, near the movement's close. The avoidance of expected local harmonic closures sustains the large-scale harmonic tension as well as prolonging the constant state of yearning for resolution and arrival. Suddenly emerging amid the fervent states of passion is the contrasting middle section, titled *Im Legendenton* ("In the tone of a legend"). Noble and wise in sonority, it evokes the tone of an epic storytelling, of the forgotten past. The impassioned opening returns once more, before leading into the coda and one of the most special moments in the movement — the quotation

from Beethoven's song cycle, *An die ferne Geliebte*, Op.98 ("To the distant beloved"). Coinciding with the first pure C Major tonic arrival in the movement, Schumann quotes the opening lines of the last song in Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte*, titled *Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder* with the following text:

*Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder,  
Die ich dir, Geliebte, sang*

Accept, then, these songs  
I sang for you, beloved

Schumann's tribute to Beethoven, the quotation from *An die ferne Geliebte*, and his secret message to Clara all come together in the final measures, as the movement comes to a gentle arrival.

The second movement, marked *Mäßig. Durchaus energisch* ("Moderate. Quite energetic."), is highly orchestral in texture as the movement opens with grandiose, rippling arpeggiated chords spanning over two octaves. In contrast to the personal and impassioned lament of the opening movement, the second movement is a march and communal in nature, evoking the feeling of the citizen of the world. Now in the key of E-flat Major (a key often associated with majestic character in Beethoven's works, namely his Piano Concerto No.5 Op.73 "Emperor," or his Piano Sonata No.26 Op.81a "Les Adieux"), the movement is a rich interweaving between the full orchestra and individual instruments in dialogue with one another. Trombones blare beneath the strings, as the woodwinds flutter above in the higher registers coloring the landscape. Throughout nearly the entire movement, dotted rhythms persist relentlessly and obsessively, displaying one of Schumann's most recognizable compositional fingerprints as well as hinting at his eventual state of insanity years later. The middle section is akin to a Mendelssohn-ian Songs Without Words as the lush inner melodies provide a respite from the obsessive dotted march rhythm. Schumann's rendition of the Songs Without Words is not void of his characteristic mercurial humor however, as dotted rhythms follow the lyrical melodies in jest. A return to the opening march follows, before culminating in a wildly exhilarating coda of constant leaping melodic lines in dotted rhythm as a breathless outpour of joy and a testament to one of the highest pianistic challenges in the repertoire.

Time hovers suspended in the sublimely poetic final movement of the Fantasy, indicated *Langsam getragen. Durchweg leise zu halten*. ("Carried slowly. Keep quiet throughout."). Tender, improvisatory, and an unfiltered expression of Schumann's innermost feelings and thoughts, the movement is a culmination of the emotional journey of the monumental work. In relation to the musical ciphers and Schumann's expression of love for Clara, materials are presented in pairs on multiple levels in this final movement — the movement itself is divided symmetrically in two parts, phrases are often presented twice, and melodic lines often appear in both the lower ranges and the upper ranges that portray a male voice and a female voice responding to one another in dialogue. Exploration of the remote keys such as A-flat Major and D-flat Major create an otherworldly effect, lingering between the realms of a distant world far from the present. The notes A and G, which opened the whole Fantasy in the first movement and formed the beginning of the "Clara" motif, appears here too in the final movement in original form as it rings out clearly above the clouds in the opening measures as well as in the final measures. With a final embellishment of the A-G from the "Clara" motif, and the final settling in C Major, the movement and the Fantasy comes to a peaceful rest.

## 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 in New York City, Sudler Hall at Yale University, Greenfield Hall, Maiori Town Hall in Italy, and Evens Hall in Israel.

Mizuho 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. Mizuho's performances have been broadcasted on Roim Olam in Israel and News 12: The Bronx in New York.

Mizuho 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, the Japanese American Association of New York Scholarship and was also the Yale Club of New York's Charlie Guggenheimer Scholar. Mizuho earned her Master's 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. Mizuho 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.