

Presents a Faculty Recital:

Craig Sheppard, *piano*

Happy Birthday, Franz!

A Celebration of the 200th Birthday of
Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

Les Années de Pèlerinage
(The Years of Pilgrimage),
Books I and II

October 21, 2011

7:30 PM

Meany Theater

PROGRAM

Book I – Suisse (Switzerland)

La Chapelle de Guillaume Tell (The Chapel of William Tell)

Le Lac de Wallenstadt (Lake Wallenstadt)

Pastorale

Au bord d'une source (By a Spring)

Orage (Thunderstorm)

Vallée d'Obermann (Obermann's Valley)

Eglogue (A Shepherd's Song)

Le Mals du Pays (Homesickness)

Les Cloches de Genève (The Bells of Geneva)

INTERMISSION

Book II – Italie (Italy)

Sposalizio (Betrothal) (after The Betrothal of the Virgin by Raphael)

Il Penseroso (The Thinker) (after the statue by Michelangelo)

Canzonetta di Salvador Rosa (a song after Bononcini)

Sonnetta di Petrarca 47

Sonnetta di Petrarca 104

Sonnetta di Petrarca 123

Après une Lecture de Dante (The 'Dante' Sonata)

Happy Birthday, Franz!

The first two (of three) volumes of *Années de Pèlerinage* (*Years of Pilgrimage*) were a direct result of Franz Liszt's eleven-year romantic attachment to Marie, La Comtesse d'Agoult, a member of the highest echelons of French aristocracy, and the mother of his three children. Her affair with Liszt, commencing in 1833, caused a scandal of such proportions that the couple were forced to leave Paris in 1835, absconding first to Switzerland, then to Italy. Following in the footsteps of great writers of the past, their wanderings lasted four years, until they separated in Florence in 1839. By that point, Liszt had composed eight piano pieces for the *Album d'un voyageur* (*Album of a Voyager/Wanderer*), works to a large extent inspired by Swiss landscapes, with literary references taken from Lord Byron, Sénancour and Schiller, works which were to form the nucleus of the eventual first volume of *Années, Suisse* (*Switzerland*). The impetus for the second volume, *Italie* (*Italy*), came from Liszt's earliest vocal settings, composed in the late 1830s, of *Tre Sonnette di Petrarca* (*Three Petrarch Sonnets*), with the subsequent inclusion of works of art by Raphael and Michelangelo, and readings from Dante's *La Divina Commedia* (*The Divine Comedy*). Both volumes were given their final touches during Liszt's Weimar years (1848-1861), and were published under the title by which we know them today, *Années de Pèlerinage*, during that period. These two volumes, combining art, literature and music, are the nineteenth century equivalent of present-day multimedia. They represent Liszt's firm belief in the cross-pollination of the arts, and as such are also representative of the greatest of Liszt's piano compositions. Alfred Brendel, himself an ardent Lisztian in addition to being a foremost proponent of the First Viennese School, has called these two books Liszt's 'finest achievement' next to the great B minor Sonata.

Yet, the *Années de Pèlerinage* are far more than a mere representation of landscape, art and literature in music. They are a profoundly personal journey, frequently mirroring the inner turmoil that Liszt must have been feeling during those early years, a turmoil from which he found succor later in life through the breadth of his teaching duties in both Weimar and Budapest, his innumerable charitable deeds, and a renewal and deepening of early ties to his Catholic faith.

Première Année: Suisse (First Year: Switzerland)

La Chapelle de Guillaume Tell (*The Chapel of William Tell*) refers to the spot on Lake Lucerne, dedicated to the memory of the eponymous folk hero of Swiss legend, whose exploits were the focal point for Swiss patriotism in the early years of the Swiss confederation. The grandeur of the initial melody, amplified to gargantuan proportions by the end, is interrupted by a recounting of Tell's purported feats in overcoming the enemy. In this middle section, the use of the tritone, the *diabolus in musica* (*the devil in music*), is prevalent. Schiller's famous quote, 'One for all, all for one', seems particularly appropriate to the setting.

Le Lac de Wallenstadt (*Lake Wallenstadt*) in northeastern Switzerland highlights a *chant montagnard* (*mountaineer's song*) over an undulating bass. Pref-

aced with a quote from Lord Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, its great simplicity and beauty appear the perfect antidote to a troubled world beyond.

Likewise, *Pastorale* is all bucolic refinement and grace, interrupted by a melody in the bagpipes and a persistent drone in the bass, emphasizing the weak beat in the measure. Ever evanescent, this drone trails off into nothingness at the end.

Au bord d'une source (By a Spring) must be ranked among Liszt's masterpieces. A quote from Schiller provides the backdrop to a cascade of undulating major seconds, creating a work of shimmering beauty, of colors abounding. In portraying the many facets of water, be they a pure spring, a waterfall, or merely a burbling brook, this incredible work foreshadows Liszt's later *Jeux d'eaux a la Villa d'Este (The Fountains of the Villa d'Este)* and the great works in this genre by Debussy and Ravel.

Orage (Tempest/Storm) strikes me as a baring of Liszt's innermost soul – the anger, the torment, the fear, the triumph. Lord Byron describes it thus: *But where of ye, oh tempests! is the goal? Are ye like those within the human breast? Or do ye find, at length, like eagles, some high nest?* In this work, Liszt unburdens himself in blinding fury by means of great virtuosity and a frequent use of the *diabolus in musica*. The eagle's nest seems but a distant illusion.

Vallée d'Obermann, the emotional focal point of the cycle, is prefaced with quotes from Sénancour's *Obermann* and Lord Byron's *Harold. Obermann*, a novel in the form of a series of letters written ostensibly to a friend, caused a sensation in nineteenth century Europe. Using his wanderings throughout France and Switzerland as a point of departure, Sénancour creates long discourses on love and on the 'hidden forces' of life, in which all meaning is deceptive and, ultimately, a mystery (by comparison, Lord Byron's skepticism of the forces raging within takes on a rather more noble character). The idea of 'the tormented hero' had its genesis in Goethe's *Werther* in 1774, the novel that launched the Romantic movement, and nowhere is this anguished soul more apparent than in the *Vallée d'Obermann*. Liszt, the master of *thematic transformation*, takes the initial three notes in the bass and creates a monumental work – from world weariness in the opening, to an angelic interlude, followed by a sense of unease and moral ambivalence, all expanded into triumphant resolution in the major key at the work's culmination.

Eglogue is a simple *Shepherd's Song*. With a lovely quote from Byron about the 'dewy morn, with breath all incense...laughing the clouds away with playful scorn', its simplicity is in startling contrast to the pent-up emotions of the previous two pieces in this cycle. Marked *Allegretto con moto*, the work has been performed in recent years in two beats to the bar, rather than in four as written. I wholly agree with this approach. Four beats to the bar would give a leaden quality to a work which is essentially bright and cheerful. I've often wondered why Liszt did not correct this apparent oversight in his otherwise careful editing of the first edition of *Les Années*.

Le Mal du Pays (Homesickness) is based on a Swiss alphorn melody, *le ranz des vaches*. In his short treatise on the subject from *Obermann* (the so-called *Troisième Fragment*, or *Third Fragment*), Sénancour describes in exquisite

detail the sounds and colors of the Alps, their transformations and permutations within the space of a single day, and the effect this has on the human spirit. Liszt's *Mal du Pays* is summed up in this one sentence from S nancour: '*Le ranz des vaches ne rappelle pas seulement des souvenirs, il peint. (The ranz des vaches doesn't just recall memories, it paints them).*'

Les Cloches de G n ve (The Bells of Geneva), like *Pastorale*, bears no quote. In the bright key of B Major, it bespeaks moments of intense joy and happiness. Geneva was the city to which Liszt and the Comtesse d'Agout fled from the scandal mongering they had endured in Paris. Liszt's gratitude must have known no bounds. Indeed, his first child, Blandine, was born in Geneva shortly after they arrived, a blessed event that might well have influenced this ethereal work. Following moments of great passion, *Les Cloches* finishes in an aura of repose.

Deuxi me Ann e: Italie (Second Year: Italy)

Sposalizio (Matrimony) is based on Raffaello's *Lo Sposalizio della Vergine (The Betrothal of the Virgin)*, one of the masterpieces of the High Renaissance that resides today in the Brera in Milano. In its proportions, geometrically and coloristically, it is among the greatest of paintings in the Western canon. A series of descending fifths in the bass at the beginning of Liszt's work provides a harmonic underpinning every bit as important as the actual melody itself, lending the work an idealized portrait of what a marriage could and, perhaps, should be.

Il Penseroso (The Thinker) takes its inspiration from Michelangelo's statue in the Medici Chapel in Florence. The austerity of the music is summed up in Michelangelo's own words: '*I travel around, changing location frequently, but I am incapable of changing the object of my desire. My inner fire and my persona will always be the same.*'

Salvador Rosa was a painter/poet/playwright who divided his time and his talents between Rome, Naples and Florence during the middle of the seventeenth century. Liszt's light-hearted *Canzonetta del Salvador Rosa* is based on a song by another Italian composer who lived later in the same century, Giovanni Battista Bononcini, the words describing Rosa's multi-faceted itinerant genius: '*I go around, changing location frequently, but my ideals never change. My (inner) fire and my persona will always remain the same.*'

Liszt's adaptations of three Petrarch sonnets were originally written for voice, then transcribed for piano, in the late 1830s. We can be grateful that Liszt made extensive revisions to these works during his Weimar years, for what had been a wild display of virtuosity in the name of unbridled passion gave way to dignified and beautiful discourses on love, among Liszt's most cherished piano compositions. The subtext for the set is as follows: '*Ed il suo lauro cresceva col suo amor per Laura (And his achievements grew in proportion to his love for Laura)*'. In the first, Sonnet 47, *Benedetto sia 'l giorno, e 'l mese, e l'anno...* (*Blessed be the day, the month, the year*), Petrarch chronicles the moment he first set eyes on Laura, and the profound and positive effect this has had on his view of the world around him. In Sonnet 104, *Pace non trovo...(I find no*

peace), the poet has fallen deeply in love, with passionate and violent mood swings. One moment he professes fear, the next hope; he loves others, but hates himself. Both life and death are at one and the same time repellant. He finishes: *In this state, my lady, I am thine!* In Sonnet 123, his love, and the understanding thereof, have risen to an entirely different plane: *To vidi in terra angelici costumi, e celeste bellezze al mondo sole (I saw angels on this earth of incomparable beauty...)*. There is a reflective quality to this piece that, in spite of two impassioned interruptions, is profoundly endearing. It leaves the listener in an almost altered state.

The publication of Goethe's *Faust* in 1805, in contrast to the more secular principles of the *Enlightenment*, presaged a century obsessed with the forces of Good and Evil. In this environment, the popularity of Dante's *La Divina Commedia* (*Divine Comedy*) had a rebirth. Victor Hugo's poem, *Après une Lecture de Dante (Upon Reading Dante)* from *Les voix intérieures (Internal voices)*, starts off with the line: *Quand le poète peint l'enfer, il peint sa vie (When the poet paints Hell, he paints his life)*. Liszt took the title of his *Fantasia quasi Sonata (Fantasy in the form of a Sonata)* from Hugo's poem, the contents of which offer insight into this great and often misunderstood piano masterpiece. The *diabolus in musica* abounds throughout the *Dante Sonata* – indeed, not only are these tritones particularly prevalent throughout the very opening, but the work's D minor tonality stands in tritonal contrast to the key of A flat in the preceding Petrarch sonnet, no mere coincidence. Following the introduction, the wailing of the underworld is heard in an irregular nine-bar phrase over two long pedals that blur all certainty. The F sharp Major climax represents Lucifer, and the ensuing episode, using the exact same theme, recalls Dante's love for Francesca da Rimini – good and evil side by side, a *thematic transformational* stroke of genius. Moreover, one becomes increasingly aware of the difference that a mere half step can make in terms of musical illusion. The perfect fifth, a half step removed from the tritone, acts in exactly the opposite way to the *devil in music*, a token of grace amidst the anguish and turmoil of the envisaged *Purgatorio*. The voices of angels, set in a *tremolando* in the upper registers of the piano, bring us to the triumphal key of D Major, a triumph resolutely manifest in the trumpet fanfares and drum rolls of the final bars.

Regarding editions of these works

The *Neue Liszt Ausgabe (New Liszt Edition)*, printed in 1974 in Budapest, remains the most scholarly source of information about these works. There are, however, too many discrepancies with other available editions to take everything here at face value. Even though Liszt made considerable handwritten corrections to the first edition of *Les Années*, incorporated and published by Schott in 1858, he was known to be a careless proofreader, and I fully believe that small mistakes, particularly with regard to accidentals (or lack thereof), remained. I have tried to uncover what I think is the truth in each of these instances, and hope in the process that I have made the correct choices.

The piano for tonight's concert is Craig Sheppard's Hamburg Steinway model D, #589770. Tonight's technician is Susan Cady.

Tonight's program is being recorded for Roméo Records. The recording engineer is Dmitriy (Dima) Lipay of the Seattle Symphony. The video producer is Dr. Fumio Ohuchi, Professor and Associate Chair of the UW Department of Materials Science and Engineering.

Craig Sheppard appears with the University of Washington Symphony Orchestra on Thursday, January 26, 2012, in Meany Theater, performing Liszt's Piano Concerto #2 in A under the baton of Jonathan Pasternak. His next solo recital, the fourth in a series of five all-Brahms evenings, will be on Friday, April 20, 2012, also in Meany Theater. The program will include the left-hand version of the Bach Chaconne, the Seven Fantasies Opus 116, the Two Rhapsodies Opus 79, and the Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel, Opus 24.

Professor of Piano, CRAIG SHEPPARD, joined the faculty of the School of Music of the University of Washington in 1993. A much sought after pedagogue, Sheppard's students in both Europe and in the US have won numerous local, national and international competitions over the years. A number of former students hold positions at universities throughout the US, Europe and Asia. With his colleague, Dr. Robin McCabe, he is co-founder of the Seattle Summer Piano Institute at the University of Washington, held every summer at the School of Music for a group of sixteen gifted young pianists from around the world.

Craig Sheppard has enjoyed a highly successful international concert career that spans over forty years. In an enthusiastic review in the April, 2011, issue of London's *International Record Review* of Sheppard's most recent CD release, *The Last Three Piano Sonatas by Franz Schubert*, Robert Matthew-Walker noted: 'It was Hans Keller who said that *All great artists are, by virtue of what they do, also great teachers* and those who have heard Sheppard's recent recordings on the Romeo label – particularly the complete Beethoven sonatas and the Bach's 48 Preludes and Fugues – will know the truth of that statement...The City of Seattle and the students at its University are indeed fortunate to have him in their midst.' Bryce Morrison, in an earlier review of Sheppard's traversal of the Beethoven sonatas in *Gramophone* magazine, said: 'On record, there are few [performances] more piquantly characterized or, at their finest, more deeply sensitive to the darker recesses of Beethoven's towering imagination'. Peter Cossé, Germany's foremost piano critic, had this to say about Sheppard's Bach: 'Sheppard's technique, in all its elasticity, confirms a musician who always put these means at the service of the composer. Sheppard's Bach is learned, and in every respect well informed as to performance practices of the day. Yet, he never forces his views on the listener, but rather gives the listener sufficient breathing space in which to store the memories.' Following Sheppard's appearance at the 2010 Minnesota Beethoven Festival, the reviewer

remarked: ‘With the [solo] recitals of Yo-Yo Ma and Craig Sheppard, the festival is off to a great start!’

Craig Sheppard was born in Philadelphia in November, 1947. Following early studies with Dr. Lois Hedner and Susan Starr, he studied at the Curtis Institute under Eleanor Sokoloff, then at the Juilliard School with Sasha Gorodnitzki. He also worked with Claude Frank and Lilian Kallir as a Fromm Fellow at Tanglewood, and with Rudolf Serkin and Pablo Casals at the Marlboro Festival, culminating in a nationwide tour in the *Music from Marlboro* series. In 1972, Sheppard gave his New York début at the Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and six months later took the Silver Medal at the Leeds International Pianoforte Competition in England. Moving to London in 1973, he continued studies with Ilona Kabos, Peter Feuchtwanger and Sir Clifford Curzon, and performed with all the major orchestras in Great Britain and many on the European continent, including the Berlin Philharmonic and the orchestra of La Scala, Milan. During the twenty years he lived in England, Sheppard also taught at Lancaster University, the Yehudi Menuhin School, and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. In addition, he gave numerous master classes at both Oxford and Cambridge universities. Returning to this country in 1993 and taking up residence in Seattle, Sheppard quickly became a favorite at such venues as the Seattle Chamber Music Festival, the Seattle Symphony (where he opened the 1996 Season), and other local and regional arts organizations.

Craig Sheppard’s repertoire is eclectic, comprising forty-plus recital programs and over sixty concerti spanning all the major eras of Western music. An avid chamber music player, musicians he has collaborated with include Wynton Marsalis, José Carreras, Victoria de los Angeles, the Cleveland and Emerson string quartets, and many members of the younger generation, including James Ehnes, Stefan Jackiw, Richard O’Neill and Johannes Moser. In this country, he has soloed with the orchestras of Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas, San Francisco and Rochester, among others. Conductors he has played with include Sir Georg Solti, James Levine, Michael Tilson Thomas, Aaron Copland, Yehudi Menuhin, Esa Pekka Salonen, David Zinman, and Leonard Slatkin. A champion of contemporary music, Sheppard gave the world première this past summer of Laura Kaminsky’s *Horizon Lines* at the Seattle Chamber Music Festival, and will give the world première this coming May for *Music of Remembrance* of a new commission by Jake Heggie on the life of the Polish dissident, Krystyna Zywylska.

Craig Sheppard’s CDs can be found on the Roméo, AT-Berlin, Philips, Sony, and Chandos labels. A voracious reader, he is known for his broad academic interests, particularly foreign languages.

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