

Invesco Piano Concerts

Daniil Trifonov

Tuesday, March 28, 2017 at 8:00 pm

Pre-concert conversation at 7:15pm

This is the 708th concert in Koerner Hall

PROGRAM

Robert Schumann: *Kinderszenen*, Op. 15

- "Von fremden Ländern (Of Strange Lands and People)
- "Curiose Geschichte" (A Curious Story)
- "Hasche-Mann" (Blind-Man's Buff)
- "Bittendes Kind" (Entreating Child)
- "Glückes genug" (Happy Enough)
- "Wichtige Begbenheit" (Important Event)
- "Träumerei" (Reverie)
- "Am Camin" (By the Fireside)
- "Ritter vom Steckenpferd" (Knight of the Hobby Horse)
- "Fast zu Ernst" (Almost too Serious)
- "Fürchtenmachen" (Being Frightened)
- "Kind im Einschlummern" (Child Falling Asleep)
- "Der Dichter spricht" (The Poet Speaks)

Robert Schumann: Toccata in C Major, Op. 7

Robert Schumann: *Kreisleriana*, Op. 16

1. Äußerst bewegt
2. Sehr innig und nicht zu rasch
3. Sehr aufgeregt
4. Sehr langsam
5. Sehr lebhaft
6. Sehr langsam
7. Sehr rasch
8. Schnell und spielend

INTERMISSION

Dmitri Shostakovich: Selections from 24 Preludes and Fugues, Op. 87

- No. 4 in E Minor
- No. 7 in A Major
- No. 2 in A Minor
- No. 5 in D Major
- No. 24 in D Minor

Igor Stravinsky: Three movements from *Petrushka*

- "Russian Dance"
- "Petrushka's Room"
- "The Shrovetide Fair"

Robert Schumann

Born in Zwickau, Saxony, June 8, 1810; died in Eendenich, nr. Bonn, Germany, July 29, 1856

Kinderscenen (Scenes from Childhood), Op. 15 (1838)

Toccata in C Major, Op. 7 (1828-32)

Kreisleriana, Op. 16 (1838)

Clara Schumann, to whom Robert Schumann was secretly engaged at the time he wrote his *Kinderscenen*, once described her husband as ‘a moonstruck maker of charades.’ Schumann retained an unselfconscious ability to marvel at things and to re-live the world of his childhood memories. The 13 short character pieces of the *Kinderscenen* (Scenes from Childhood) enter this world and portray it through the eyes of an adult. These are pieces *about* childhood, not pieces for children to play, as was the case in his easier *Album for the Young*. The process even allowed Schumann to lift himself out of depression. Writing to Clara in March 1838, he said: “I have composed books full of things: wonderful, crazy, solemn stuff. You will open your eyes when you come to play it. In fact, sometimes I feel quite bursting with music.” As the inspiration continued, Schumann grouped the short pieces into three of his most successful keyboard cycles: *Novelleten*, *Kinderscenen*, and *Kreisleriana*. He explained his concept of *Kinderscenen* in a letter to a friend as “the reflections of an adult for other adults.” The titles of many of the pieces confirm this perspective – ‘Happy Enough,’ ‘Being Frightened,’ and so on. But a more distanced, adult perspective also creeps in with ‘Entreating Child’ and ‘Child Falling Asleep,’ both of which end inconclusively, with a question. The latter leads to a third perspective – that of the poet, or Schumann himself, as he bids a gentle, nostalgic farewell to the sleeping child.

By contrast, the **Toccata, Op. 7** shows Schumann the virtuoso pianist showering the performer with technical teasers in every bar of the six-minute duration of the piece. Written while Schumann was still a student in Heidelberg, practising the piano for hours a day with a view to a concert career, the Toccata remains one of the most challenging pieces in the piano repertoire. Its oscillating note pairs, right-hand quick-fire octaves, repeated 16th-notes requiring rapid changes of fingers, and contrasts of legato and staccato touch all bring to mind the violin virtuosity of Paganini, whom Schumann heard in his university town in 1830. But this Toccata marries the then latest virtuoso display with the discipline of a Baroque toccata, wrapped up in one of Schumann’s most successful essays in classical sonata form.

“The best description of Schumann himself,” Brahms once said, “is to be found in some of the writings of Hoffmann – especially in the splendid Kreisler.” Johannes Kreisler is a larger than life Kapellmeister who appears several times in E.T.A. Hoffman’s published fiction. Schumann calls him eccentric, wild, and gifted, feeling a bond between the fictional Kreisler and the romantic composer that he himself embodied. He wrote *Kreisleriana* in the white heat of inspiration, in just four days in April 1838. In its pages he wove constant references to the woman he loved. “You and one of your ideas are the principal subject and I shall call them *Kreisleriana* and dedicate them to you,” he wrote to Clara. “You will smile so sweetly when you see yourself in them.” Cryptic messages are encoded in *Kreisleriana*. Thematic cross references underline the cycle of eight fantasy pieces and bring a powerful sense of unity to its music. At the same time, *Kreisleriana* has been seen as a musical depiction of Schumann’s impending insanity. Turbulent, rhetorical pieces representing the Florestan side of Schumann’s character (No. 1, the second Intermezzo of No. 2, No. 3, and No. 5) alternate with the more reflective, internalised, Eusebius side (No. 2, No. 4, and No. 6). The music in these movements correspondingly alternates between a restless G minor and a more dreamy B-flat major.

Dmitri Shostakovich

Born in St. Petersburg, Russia, September 12/25, 1906; died in Moscow, Russia, August 9, 1975

Selections from 24 Preludes and Fugues, Op. 87 (1951)

“I would describe this music as ugly ... I see this as a formalist fugue ... Are these the images of Soviet reality?” The speaker with the delicate ears was a secretary of the Union of Soviet Composers, a position of power in Stalin’s Soviet Union. Shostakovich had just spent two evenings in the middle of May 1951 playing his latest composition, the 24 Preludes and Fugues, Op. 87, to a gathering of composers, functionaries, and invited guests in the Union’s recital hall. Now, Soviet officialdom, functioning as a jury, savagely criticized the 140-minute work, motivated by political opportunism and – in the words of its unofficial dedicatee, the 27-year-old pianist Tatyana Nikolayeva – ‘black envy.’

Six months earlier, Shostakovich had been awarded the Stalin Prize (First Class) and a substantial amount of money for an oratorio *The Song of the Forests*, lauding Stalin as 'the great gardener' for his vision of transforming the Russian steppes into forest, and for the film score *The Fall of Berlin*. Emboldened by the success, Shostakovich returned from official duties during the Bach bicentennial celebrations in Leipzig, East Germany, and began composition of one of his landmark works, a deeply personal tribute to the 24 Preludes and Fugues of Bach. The intellectual integrity of Shostakovich's Op. 87 contrasts starkly with the two 'official' compositions that won him the Stalin Prize.

Igor Stravinsky

Born in Oranienbaum [now Lomonosov], nr. St. Petersburg, Russia, June 5/17, 1882; died in New York, New York, April 6, 1971

Three Movements from *Petrushka* (1910-11/1921)

Petrushka is a reflection of ourselves, a character one step removed from reality. Stravinsky arrived at the image that was to evolve into a revolutionary ballet score while composing a short *Konzertstück* for piano and orchestra in 1910. He repeatedly pictured a puppet, suddenly endowed with life, exasperating the patience of the orchestra with diabolical cascades of arpeggios. To Paris in 1911, the ballet *Petrushka* brought strident, incisive sonorities, jagged rhythms, irregular metres, and a previously unexplored range of musically expressive character for dance. Choreographer Mikhail Fokine worked overtime with the dancers, who struggled with its constantly shifting rhythmic patterns. The most famous dissonance is that of the so-called 'Petrushka chord.' It forms the musical germ of the entire ballet. Two chords – a combination of the C major (all 'white' notes) and F-sharp major (all 'black' notes) – clash, reflecting the mixture of burlesque and pathos associated with *Petrushka*'s musical soul. Several Russian folk melodies and dances permeate the score, connecting it closely to the time and place represented on stage. There are also Austrian waltzes and a French music hall song, though they blend seamlessly into Stravinsky's musical language. The musical score is a mixture of narrative and set-piece dances. The effect is that of a mosaic – a patchwork impression of juxtaposition rather than symphonic development and a real tour de force of virtuosity. Stravinsky adapted three of its tableaux in 1921 for pianist Arthur Rubinstein, bringing the music, in a way, back full circle to his initial image of the piece.

- Program notes © 2017 Keith Horner

Daniil Trifonov

Piano

Russian pianist Daniil Trifonov has made a spectacular ascent in the world of classical music since winning First Prize at both the Tchaikovsky and Rubinstein competitions in 2011 at the age of 20. Combining consummate technique with rare sensitivity and depth, his performances are a perpetual source of awe.

The 2016-17 season brings the release of *Transcendental*, a double album that not only represents Trifonov's third title as an exclusive Deutsche Grammophon artist, but also the first time that Liszt's complete concert etudes have been recorded for the label. In concert, the pianist – winner of *Gramophone*'s 2016 Artist of the Year award – plays Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto under Riccardo Muti in the historic gala finale of the Chicago Symphony's 125th anniversary celebrations. Having scored his second Grammy Award nomination with *Rachmaninov Variations*, he performed Rachmaninov for his debut with the Berlin Philharmonic under Sir Simon Rattle at the orchestra's famous New Year's Eve concerts, which aired live in cinemas throughout Europe. Also with Rachmaninov, he makes debuts with the Melbourne and Sydney Symphonies, returns to the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Gustavo Dudamel, and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, and headlines the Munich Philharmonic's "Rachmaninov Cycle" tour with longtime collaborator Valery Gergiev. Mozart is the vehicle for his reengagements with the New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, and Philadelphia Orchestra, as well as for dates with the Staatskapelle Dresden at home and at the Salzburg Festival and London's BBC Proms. He rejoins the Staatskapelle for Ravel, besides playing Beethoven with Zurich's Tonhalle Orchestra; Prokofiev with the Rotterdam Philharmonic; Chopin on tour with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra; and Schumann with the Houston Symphony, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, and on tour with Riccardo Chailly and La Scala Orchestra.

An accomplished composer, Trifonov also reprises his own acclaimed concerto in Kansas City. With a new program of Schumann, Shostakovich, and Stravinsky, he makes recital debuts at London's Barbican and Melbourne's Recital Centre; appears in Berlin, Vienna, Florence, Madrid, Oslo, Moscow, and other European hotspots; and returns to Philadelphia, Baltimore, and – for the fourth consecutive year – the mainstage of New York's Carnegie Hall. He also gives duo recitals with his former teacher, pianist Sergei Babayan, in Princeton and Sarasota, and looks forward to returning to the Tanglewood, Verbier, Baden-Baden, and Salzburg Festivals.

Trifonov began his musical training at the age of five and attended Moscow's Gnessin School of Music as a student of Tatiana Zelikman, before pursuing his piano studies with Sergei Babayan at the Cleveland Institute of Music. He has also studied composition, and continues to write for piano, chamber ensemble, and orchestra.

Daniil Trifonov made his Royal Conservatory debut on April 14, 2013.