

Cynthia Dahlgren, piano

Program Notes

Ludwig van Beethoven wrote Sonata No. 21 in C Major, Op. 53 in 1804. This work is a quintessential example of Beethoven's middle style period, which is characterized by his expansion of musical form and bold expression of personal ideas. In this piano sonata, the composer demonstrates his propensity for extended development of musical materials and unexpected harmonic modulations. The popular title of this work is the "Waldstein" in honor of Beethoven's friend and patron, Count Ferdinand von Waldstein of Vienna, to whom the piece is dedicated. Another nickname for this work is L'Aurora ("The Dawn" in Italian). This descriptive name references the gentle opening of the final movement, which evokes the image of a sunrise. Originally, Beethoven had written a lengthy middle movement for this work which is known today as *Andante favori*, WoO 57. However, at the request of a publisher who felt it made the sonata impractically long, Beethoven replaced his original second movement with the *Introduzione: Adagio molto*. Therefore, one can make the argument that this is really a two-movement sonata, in which the final movement is preceded by a slow introduction.

Frédéric Chopin published two sets of *Études*, Op. 10 and Op. 25 in 1833 and 1837, respectively. "Étude" is a French word, meaning study. Several 19th century composers wrote études to help pianists practice various technical challenges. However, Chopin is widely credited with elevating this form from purely utilitarian exercises to masterfully artistic concert pieces. Both sets contain twelve short works, each showcasing a specific technical challenge for the performer. **Étude Op. 10, No. 11** in E-flat Major is sometimes called the arpeggio or guitar étude because the texture consists of widely spaced arpeggiated chords in both hands. **Étude Op. 25, No. 10** in B Minor is the octave étude and features a three-part form, with fast and loud outer sections and a quiet, calm middle section in the relative major key.

---Intermission---

Claude Debussy wrote *Estampes, L. 100* in 1903. *Estampes* translates to "prints" and refers to the artistic technique of printing images from engraved copper or wood plates. These pieces were intended to portray nature and faraway places. According to Debussy, "If one cannot afford to travel, one substitutes the imagination."

The first piece, *Pagodes* (Pagodas) refers to small buildings that feature wide, sweeping ornamental roofs in traditional Asian culture. Debussy was inspired by his experience at the Paris Exposition in 1889 where he heard the Javanese gamelan and became enthralled with the exotic sounds from the Far East. Marguerite Long wrote, "Here are the dances, the fish-ponds, even the enigmatic smile on the faces of the gods of China. One sees pointed roofs, hears little bells, and the tinkle of transparent porcelain."

La soirée dans Grenade (The Evening in Granada) transports the listener to Spain, where we hear the repeating rhythm of the habanera dance, Arabic-influenced Andalusian melody, and guitar strumming with far-away castanet effects. The Spanish composer Manuel de Falla offers high praise for his French contemporary, writing that Debussy's, "power of evocation borders on the miracle when one realizes that this music was composed by a foreigner...the entire composition in its most minute details, conveys admirably Spain."

Jardins sous la pluie (Gardens in the Rain) depicts a scene in Debussy's native France. This toccata-like piece incorporates the melodies of two popular French nursery rhymes. One can picture a child watching through a window as rain is falling in the garden. At times, the rain is gentle and soothing but there are moments of stormy intensity. Finally, at the end of the piece the storm dissipates and, as Maurice Hinson describes, "the scene is bathed in glorious sunlight after its heavenly bath."

Franz Liszt's *Mephisto Waltz No. 1* is subtitled The Dance at the Village Inn: Episode from Lenau's "Faust." Liszt first encountered Goethe's *Faust* as a young man and the story made a lifelong impression on him. Liszt wrote a variety of music based on this literature. Between 1859 and 1862, he composed versions of *Mephisto Waltz No. 1* for solo piano as well as orchestra and 4-hand piano. Inspired by the popular success of these works, Liszt eventually published *Mephisto Waltz No. 2-4* as well as a *Mephisto Polka* for solo piano in 1885. This piece is an example of Romantic program music, which means the music is intended to portray a specific story. In this case, Liszt takes his inspiration for the music from Lenau's dramatic poem, which is described by this summary from David Ewen's *Complete Book of Classical Music*:

"There is a wedding feast in progress in the village inn, with music, dancing, carousing. Mephistopheles and Faust pass by, and Mephistopheles induces Faust to enter and take part in the festivities. Mephistopheles snatches the fiddle from the hands of a lethargic fiddler and draws from it indescribably seductive and intoxicating strains. The amorous Faust whirls about with a full-blooded village beauty in a wild dance; they waltz in mad abandon out of the room, into the open, away into the woods. The sounds of the fiddle grow softer and softer, and the nightingale warbles his love-laden song."

Thank you so much for attending my recital. I want to especially thank Dr. Baruch Meir who has helped me prepare this program. I would like to dedicate tonight's performance to my mother, Emilie Bova, who was my first piano teacher and has always supported my love of piano. Thank you, Mom!