



HOFSTRA
UNIVERSITY®
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

presents a

SENIOR RECITAL

featuring

Robert Buonaspina, *piano*



Guest Artists

Matthew Koraus, *piano*

Paul Ceglio, *drums*

Ryan Slavin, *bass*

Saturday, February 10, 2018

8 p.m.

*The Helene Fortunoff Theater
Monroe Lecture Center, South Campus*

~ PROGRAM ~

Piano Sonata No. 26 in Eb major, Op. 81a Ludwig Van Beethoven
"Les Adieux" (1770–1827)

Das Lebewohl
Abwesenheit
Das Wiedersehen



from Six Chants Polonais, S. 480 Chopin, arr. Franz Liszt
No. 5. Meine Freuden (Mes joies) (1811–1886)

from Fantasiestücke, Op. 12 Robert Schumann
No. 3. Warum? (1810–1856)
No. 2. Aufschwung



Keyboard Concerto No. 1 in D minor, Johann Sebastian Bach
BWV 1052 (1685–1750)

Allegro
Adagio
Allegro

cadenza by Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

Professor Matthew Koraus, *accompaniment*

~ Intermission ~

Among the Flight of Sparrows

Robert Buonaspinga
(b. 1996)



Little Rascal on a Rock

Thad Jones
(1923–1986)

Giant Steps

John Coltrane
(1926–1967)

I'll Be Seeing You

Sammy Fain
(1902–1989)

Pensativa

Clare Fischer
(1928–2012)

Over the Rainbow

Harold Arlen
(1905–1986)

500 Miles High

Chick Corea
(b. 1941)

Paul Ceglie, *drums*
Ryan Slavin, *bass*



For Robert Buonaspinga, this recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for MUS 101C. Robert is a student of Professor Blanche Abram and Dr. David Lalama.

The audience is asked to respect the performers by silencing all cellular devices and refraining from flash photography during the performance.

~ Program Notes ~

Written by Robert Buonaspinna

Piano Sonata No. 26 in Eb major, Op. 81a
"Les Adieux"

Ludwig Van Beethoven
(1770–1827)

In early 1809, Ludwig van Beethoven lived a prosperous life in Vienna under the patronage of his loyal Viennese supporters, one of whom was the much admired Archduke Rudolph. In the spring of that year, however, the French invasion of Vienna, spearheaded by Napoléon Bonaparte, forced the Archduke to leave the city. It was the removal of the Archduke for nine months which saw a period of distress that thwarted the composer's sense of national identity — and consequently, his musical output. This ousting of the Archduke was one of many losses for the Austrian Empire in the 1809 War of the Fifth Coalition.

Beethoven's *Les Adieux* Piano Sonata in Eb major is one of the last sonatas of his "Middle Period," a bridge to the musical maturity of his "Later Period." It is also one of his only entirely programmatic works, meaning that the multi-movement work tells a story start to finish. Programmatic works like such reflect the story for its own sake, eschewing the heavy influence of outside factors. While some sources erroneously suggest that this sonata may have served entirely as a special dedication to Archduke Rudolph, it is more likely that, if anything, the programmatic composition reflects the volatile political climate of Austrian nationalism amid the 1809 Napoleonic invasion of Vienna. Nonetheless, in the composition's 1811 publication rests an inscribed tribute in the first movement: "On the departure of his Imperial Highness, for the Archduke Rudolph in admiration."

To help rectify a musical narrative as intuitive to the Sonata's programmatic nature, the composer included extra ancillary musical notations (such as dynamics and expression markings) in his original manuscript, moreso than in other sonatas he had written. Beethoven even titled the sonata himself the French "*Les Adieux*," which translates to "the farewell," or "fare thee well," usually to a group of people. In true programmatic nature, the composer named each movement – the first movement being **Lebewohl**, which translates in German to a more individually heartfelt "fare thee well," to emulate the

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personal sorrow one feels when saying goodbye to a friend. This movement begins with a clear, somber statement of the phrase “fare thee well” over the first three tones of the opening motif. The motif transforms in a brilliant, sonata-form Allegro section and makes several resurgences in its prime statement throughout the end of the first movement, each reiteration dying away — much akin to the feeling of resignation that accompanies loss.

The second movement is titled **Abwesenheit**, which translates directly to “Absence.” This austere movement emulates the emptiness of one’s soul in the absence of a friend. The music presents a downhearted and despondent melody, with sectional phrases of hopefulness. The movement yearns to conclude with a curious dominant seventh chord, but instead elides to the final movement in what programmatically seems to be the joyous realization of a friend’s arrival. The finale, **Das Wiedersehen**, “Seeing Again,” or “The Return,” showcases an enthusiastic and ebullient streamline of happiness throughout. Also in sonata form, the final movement features many heartwarming melodies and intricate embellishments reflective of the protagonist’s unabashed cheerfulness upon a friend’s return.

On a personal level, I found it appropriate to theme my Senior Recital after the profound *Les Adieux* Sonata, artistically reinstating my personal “farewell” to Hofstra University. Of course, embedded within the Sonata itself is more than just a tale of “farewell”; it is a journey that celebrates the presence of formative personal interactions and experiences — gratifyingly positive connections — that affect someone so deeply and fortify one’s being. It goes without saying that the experiences and the bonds I’ve shared the past four years at Hofstra University have shaped and challenged me positively. Tonight, above anything, is an homage to this.

Therefore, throughout my recital, I have programmed each half of my recital to follow this programmatic narrative, and it is worth noting that each piece of music tonight, in its own way, renders the spirit of *Les Adieux*. This is a narrative that invokes a sense of departure, absence, and gratifying return — all in celebration of the powerful personal connections that allow these things to happen in the first place. I encourage you, the listener, to take note of and enjoy *Les Adieux* — my “fare thee well” — in its many forms tonight.

from *Six Chants Polonais*, Op. 74
No. 5. Meine Freuden (Mes joies)

Chopin, arr. Franz Liszt
(1811–1886)

from *Fantasiestücke*, Op. 12
No. 3. Warum?
No. 2. Aufschwung

Robert Schumann
(1810–1856)

Though Frédéric Chopin is best known for his works for piano, the composer wrote throughout his life an arsenal of 19 individual song settings of Polish text for voice and piano. From 1857 to 1860, Franz Liszt arranged six of these songs for solo piano in a set titled *Six Chants Polonais*, or “Six Polish Songs.”

One of these songs was Chopin’s tender “Moja Pieszczotka” (“My Darling”), which Liszt retitled to its German counterpart, “Meine Freuden,” (also commonly known to be coupled with the French translation “Mes joies”).

Chopin’s original song contained text by poet Adam Mickiewicz that was reflected deeply by the feeling of hopeful passion in the melody. Translated from its original Polish, the text reads:

*“Into her eyes then, her eyes, stare I bolder,
close up her mouth at last,
wanting to hold her, only to kiss her, to kiss her.”*

Liszt’s transcription of this Chopin song retains this youthful splendor with all of its romantic undertones, adding in fiery pianistic cadenzas, climactic highs, and somber lows.

Schumann’s *Fantasiestücke* (1837) is a set of eight programmatic tone poems for piano that string together one narrative. Twenty-seven years old at the time, Schumann dedicated the set to Fräulein Anna Robena Laidlaw, a prolific 18-year-old Scottish pianist and good friend of the composer. Inspired by E. T. A Hoffmann’s *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier*, an anthology of music writings, the set is meant to tell the tale of “Florestan” and “Eusebius,” two characters that subjectively represent dual personalities of Schumann: the passionate, driven side, and the introspective, dreamy side.

Inevitably, different pieces in the set refer to different narratives to be told of each character. The second piece of *Fantasiestücke* is titled “**Aufschwung**,” which translates to “Soaring.” Envisioned by the composer to be a story of the character Florestan lavishly engaging in his desires, the work is defined by a sweep of joyousness and tale of strong pathos. Macro-formally, this fantasy piece exhibits qualities of both sonata and rondo forms.

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The third song in the programmatic tapestry, “**Warum?**”, or “Why?”, immediately follows “Aufschwung” in the set, and was intended by the composer as an immediate follow-up and contrast to the vivacious energy offered by the second work. In what resembles a simple binary form, the song tells the story of Eusebius’ reaction to the ostentatious lifestyle of Florestan, and seeks to counter the extravagance of the prior story with a dolefully pensive melody.

While Schumann intended the sequencing of “Aufschwung” to be followed by “Warum?”, Professor Abram and I found interest in programming these in reverse order, with “Warum?” first, then “Aufschwung.” The composer signifies “Warum?” as a truly representative measure of one’s inner anxiety — a perpetual juxtaposition between two characters that parallels the tense exuberance versus the thoughtful reclusiveness in his personality. However, in a manner seemingly similar to a caged bird being released, the introverted quality of “Warum?” is dispelled by the extroverted “Aufschwung.” With respect to the overarching theme, this set unquestionably affirms one’s doubts and apprehensions as merely trivial upon a return of happiness. What the New Grove Dictionary refers to as the “height of his passion,” “Aufschwung” is truly a landmark of Schumann’s musical craft while in his 20’s and evokes an intense, youthful vitality — albeit with strong undertones of a maturational resilience.

**Keyboard Concerto No. 1 in D minor,
BWV 1052**

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685–1750)

The earliest manuscript of Bach’s first keyboard concerto dates to 1734, though speculation suggests material of the three-movement work originates from years earlier. Early drafts of the manuscript were most likely composed during the composer’s appointment in the court in Cöthen (1717–1723) under Prince Leopold. A high salary and supportive patron here beget many of Bach’s great secular works, such as the *Well-Tempered Clavier* and the Brandenburg concerti, so it is possible that a work of such elemental prowess was forged during this time. To corroborate this point further, much of the keyboard concerto itself has quoted and reused material from Bach’s earlier works; the first movement is based on an organ prelude composed during this time, and the second movement is based on the first chorus of one of the composer’s great Cantatas, “Wir müssen durch viel Trübsal” (“We must [pass] through great sadness”). Many sources also point to the concerto being based on a lost violin concerto due to its idiomatically violinistic figurations.

The keyboard concerto is divided into three movements, the first being a stately **Allegro** in the tonic key (D minor). A six-bar theme introduces tonic material,

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which is transformed in many different related keys (relative major of the key, and the dominant minor and its relative major) throughout an Italian ritornello form. The second movement, **Adagio**, provides a warm and reverent contrast to the weight of the first. Like many of Bach's violin concertos, the slow movement is built on a firm ostinato in the bass, meaning it repeats throughout, albeit transformed in related keys such as C minor and Bb major. Florid embellishments in the solo keyboard part throughout enrich the devout, lyrical qualities of the movement. A totally stark contrast, the third and final movement, also called **Allegro**, is characterized by its fearless, rhythmic drive. A 12-bar opening figure in D minor appears, develops in toccata-like figurations, and spins out in a furious ritornello structure. I felt it appropriate to follow the thrilling build-up into the ending of the concerto with a fiery cadenza by Johannes Brahms, inserted right before the tutti recapitulation of the opening tonic material.

This Bach concerto was introduced to me last year after hearing Professor Abram's student Kevin Tims perform it at an informal piano gathering. In my opinion as a pianist and a composer, the structure, proportions, and character arc of the large-scale work (and movements therein) approach the ethereal exemplar of perfection. The composer's artfully divine celebration of solemnity and resurgence surely establishes Bach's first keyboard concerto as a work of immense authority in my program.

Among the Flight of Sparrows

Robert Buonaspirina
(b. 1996)

"Among the Flight of Sparrows," or, in its original form, "Parmi le vol de monieaux," is a composition I wrote in September 2017 for Dr. Carter's Contemporary Music Practice class, also known as MUS 169. The concept of this assignment was to compose a brief piece for piano in the style of Debussy.

At this point in the semester, we focused on tonality in a "post-tonal" world. Constructing the piece began around the concept of "obscured tonality," which entailed picking one pitch, and constructing six to seven chords that contained that note, unrelated in tonal progression. With that in mind, I decided to create a soundscape around the tone F# that reflected mediant-key relationships (keys related by a minor or major third, such as the relation of B major/D major/F major), a nascent concept of Western music at the time.

The composition yearns to emulate the splendor of sparrows — small, humble, and fearless songbirds — chronicling the tension of liftoff and the liberation of taking flight.

Little Rascal on a Rock

Thad Jones
(1923–1986)

“Little Rascal on a Rock” is an original composition for jazz ensemble, first released in 1976 by Thad Jones. Jones was an American composer and arranger, best known for his position as bandleader and prolific arranger for the NYC-based Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra.

The inspiration for the masterwork occurred in 1969 while on tour with this world-class jazz ensemble in Paris. According to a conversation Jones had with Dr. David Lalama some years later, some of the band members brought their families with them on this particular tour, and many of them had small children. The son of Jerome Richardson (the lead alto saxophonist of the group at the time) had been playing on a large rock, and Richardson, in an aside to Jones, referred to his son as a little rascal. By observing this childhood innocence, Jones drew inspiration for his original composition.

I discovered this tune through a class I took with Dr. Lalama my sophomore year: MUS 160A, or Jazz Arranging. The big-band arrangement itself relies on Jones’ clever orchestration of woodwinds (flutes and clarinets) coupled with upright bass in addition to his unique treatment of muted brass instruments. Also, because of its dense use of contrary harmonic motion throughout, I found it an interesting challenge to analyze these quintessential Thad Jones harmonies and adapt it for solo piano. Over a few days, I transcribed it into music notation software, then compressed it into two piano staves.

With an ABAB’ musical form, the tune itself imposes a deceiving challenge to the jazz improviser, in that, while the tune begins on an Fmaj13 chord, it immediately jumps to the tonal area of E major and then Ab major. The B sections are filled with cycles of chords with several alterations, and no real sense of tonic foundation. In fact, in true “Thad-Jones-ian” harmonic writing, the only *true* cadence of the entire tune is at the end of the form — a convincing C major ending, which in fact, is just structurally a dominant chord that leads back to the beginning of the form.

Giant Steps

John Coltrane
(1926–1967)

In 1960, John Coltrane's album *Giant Steps* was released on Atlantic Records, featuring "Giant Steps" as the first tune. The original recording features Coltrane on tenor saxophone, Paul Chambers (bass), Tommy Flanagan (piano), and Art Taylor (drums). Coltrane was known for giving his band members music in a moment's notice, thus presenting major challenges for soloists such as his pianist Tommy Flanagan during the recording sessions. It should be noted that Flanagan rerecorded the tune later in his career, employing mastery of the harmonic rhythm.

The tune itself is characterized by its fast harmonic rhythm, meaning it does not stay grounded in any particular key for more than one measure. Like my original composition "Among the Flight of Sparrows," the tune is structured around the prevalence of mediant-key relationships. In this case, the tonal areas of "Giant Steps" are B major, G major, and Eb major — each a major third apart.

The composition has thus since become a staple in repertoire for aspiring jazz musicians because of the challenges built by these mediant-key relationships. The tune has been recorded by innumerable jazz giants such as Bob Mintzer, Jaco Pastorius, Woody Herman, and many others.

I'll Be Seeing You

Sammy Fain
(1902–1989)

In 1938, the American Songbook was gifted “I’ll Be Seeing You,” with music by Sammy Fain and lyrics by Irving Kahal. Originally written for the 1938 Broadway musical *Right This Way*, the sentimental ballad was popularized as the highlight in an otherwise unpopular show. The tune was sung in the third act of the musical, originally by singer Tamara Drasin, who delivered the performance seated downstage at a small table in a café. Kahal’s lyrics read as follows:

*“I’ll be seeing you,
In all the old familiar places
That this heart of mine embraces
All day through.*

*In that small café;
The park across the way;
The children’s carousel;
The chestnut trees; the wishin’ well.*

*I’ll be seeing you
In every lovely summer’s day;
In everything that’s light and gay,
I’ll always think of you that way.*

*I’ll find you in the morning sun
And when the night is new.
I’ll be looking at the moon,
But I’ll be seeing you.”*

With a form ABA’C, the ballad employs use of many sequential melodic patterns, hence its sing-ability to the general public. The tonic stays rooted throughout the entire form (in either the tonic or the relative minor), with harmonic movement that serves to reinforce or expand the tonal area of either at any given time.

Though the show *Right This Way* closed after only 15 performances, the legacy of “I’ll Be Seeing You” has entered the lexicon of jazz musicians around the world. Following Bing Crosby’s #1 hit recording in 1944, the song achieved much success and immediately became an American anthem for love and loss in a time when many loved ones were deployed overseas. Billie Holliday, Frank Sinatra, Lady Day (Eleanora Fagan), Liberace, and Stevie Wonder, among many others, also have several notable performances of the standard. Additionally, the song revisited success just recently in the early 2000’s movie *The Notebook*, where it is referenced in the last scene as the two lovers Allie and Noah die together.

“Pensativa” by Clare Fischer is a jazz standard in a bossa nova style recorded on his 1962 album *Bossa Nova Jazz Samba*. Translating to “Pensive Woman” in Portuguese, this became one of the most prominent releases of music in a Latin style not released by someone born in that culture. Since then it has been recorded by many prominent jazz artists, including Art Blakey, Bill Evans, Gene Harris, Freddie Hubbard, and many others. This jazz standard was just one of many successes the composer celebrated during his life, including, but not limited to, his Grammy-winning arrangements for several A-list vocal artists of the 20th century.

The music itself contains an extended, 64-bar “AABA” form and explores unrelated tonal areas throughout. The A sections of the form are composed of expanded tonal areas of Gb major and D major, whereas the B section of the form contains a surprisingly refreshing C major tonal center, and then the form concludes with an expanded tonic of A major. The delineated harmonic rhythm of the middle-level form rides on Fischer’s mastery of tension and release and meticulous voice-leading, all compositional syntax prevalent in the composer’s discography.

Over 20 years after the release of the original record, Fischer decided to add and reprise lyrics that reflected the nature of the piece. Surely, this text reflects a certain level of despondency very similar to that of the *Les Adieux* piano sonata’s second movement:

*“As with each new dawn
Sun is giving the breath of day,
And warms the cold from night
And hovers softly o’er the sea of day.*

*And now with the twilight
You sit pensive and lost it seems
What lived so near last night
Is now converted into empty dreams.*

*For day starts once more anew
And lifts you from the clutching bonds of night
And leads you once more in search of happiness
Ever seeking on and on, searching endlessly for what is gone.*

*Then night drops its curtain
Making certain your loneliness
And drops a shroud of gloom
That leaves you in your lonely pensiveness.”*

Over the Rainbow

Harold Arlen
(1905–1986)

After a slew of previous popular hits such as “It’s Only a Paper Moon” and “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime,” Harold Arlen and Yip Harburg were commissioned to write what became their most commercially successful song ever. The 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz* introduced the beloved “Over the Rainbow” to the American public. The protagonist, Dorothy, played by Judy Garland, sings the tune to herself early in the plot, with the subtext being that she longs to escape her dull life working on a farm in Kansas. Harburg’s lyrics for the musical featurette read as follows:

*“When all the world is a hopeless jumble,
And the raindrops tumble all around,
Heaven opens a magic lane.
When all the clouds darken up the skyway
There’s a rainbow highway to be found,
Leading from your window pane.
To a place behind the sun, just a step beyond the rain;*

*Somewhere over the rainbow, way up high,
There’s a land that I heard of once in a lullaby,
Somewhere over the rainbow skies are blue,
And the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true.*

*Someday you’ll wish upon a star
And wake up where the clouds are far behind you,
Where troubles melt like lemon drops
Away above the chimney tops,
That’s where you’ll find me.*

*Somewhere over the rainbow, blue birds fly
Birds fly over the rainbow,
Why then oh why can’t I?*

*If happy little bluebirds fly
Beyond the rainbow,
Why oh why can’t I?”*

Following a simple AABA form (with a tag at the end of the song’s macro-form), “Over the Rainbow” stays in one key the entire song, and contains characteristic intervallic leaps for much of its melodic material. The song also

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contains an introductory verse (the first stanza above), though this verse is not sung in Garland's famous *The Wizard of Oz* scene.

The timeless standard celebrated much success during the 20th century, and is listed as the #1 "Song of the Century" on lists compiled by the Recording Industry Association for America and the National Endowment for the Arts, in addition to having won the Academy Award for "Best Original Song." Similar to "I'll Be Seeing You," "Over the Rainbow" also became a hymn for American troops in World War II, signifying a yearning for a better life. Several artists among several genres, up to this day, continue to record covers of this song, most notably the fairly recent 1993 Israel Kamakawiwo'ole ukulele version, where he combines the standard with "What a Wonderful World."

At almost every juncture, anyone musically or commercially involved with the creation of "Over the Rainbow" boasts a universal and timeless impact. It is the ultimate anthem for longing, and thus lends itself well as an addition to the underlying narrative throughout my program.

500 Miles High

Chick Corea
(b. 1941)

Chick Corea's "500 Miles High" was recorded in 1972 for the 1973 release of *Light as a Feather*, the same album that contains Corea's famous hit "Spain." This was the second album release from "Return to Forever," an experimental jazz collective founded by Corea himself. "500 Miles High" since then has been recorded by greats such as Stan Getz, George Shearing, and the vocal group Manhattan Transfer.

The original 1973 song is nine minutes long, and features Brazilian singer Flora Purim on three verses. The opening verse of the tune, with lyrics by Neville Potter, reads as follows:

*"Someday you look into her eyes
Then there'll be no goodbyes
And yesterday will have gone
You'll find yourself in another space
500 miles high."*

A primarily goal of Corea's in "500 Miles High" was an embrace of his Spanish culture, which is apparent in the underpinning Latin idiom throughout the album. Additionally, after joining the Church of Scientology in 1972, Corea advocated the advantage of *clarity*, a major tenet of the belief system. *Clarity* in Scientology refers to one of the stages of a person's life they must achieve to reach the "Bridge of Total Freedom," where one frees his/her body of engrams, or unwanted personal traumas. For the jazz group, this engendered an opportunity to create more clear and communicable music that reached a larger audience. As a result, the great successes of *Light as a Feather* saw a new era of experimental music-making in Corea's ensemble — that still made itself readily accessible to the public.

Unfortunately, "500 Miles High" has also become somewhat of an anthem for drug culture in the years since its release. However, Corea contends that the song refers to the act of ridding oneself of life's burdens — achieving *clarity* — the "spirit of flying high."



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