

Studies:

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YST
Yong Siew Toh
Conservatory
of Music



Kuo Lyu-Yan, piano
plays Franck, Lutoslawski
and Brahms

23 Nov 2021 (Tues), 14:40
Venue: YST Concert Hall



23 November 2021 | TUESDAY

Kuo Lyu-Yan

Piano Recital

Programme

FRANCK

Prelude, Fugue et Variation for Organ in B Minor, Op.18 (transcription for solo piano by Harold Bauer)

LUTOSLAWSKI

Two Studies for Piano

BRAHMS

Variations on a Theme of Paganini in A Minor, Op. 35, Book I

About The Performer

Kuo Lyu-Yan (Juliette) is a Taiwanese pianist, who currently studies in Yong Siew Toh conservatory of music in Singapore under Mr. Albert Tiu studio. She has studied with Grace Chung, and has also taken masterclasses with Lorenzo Soules, Boris Berman, Christopher Hinterhuber, Dorian Lejak, Hee-Sung Joo, Jenny Lin, Yang Shu Ting, Hu Ching Yun, Nikolai Lugansky, Wei Dan Wen. She has won the second prize of the 10th International Piano Competition at Shanghai Conservatory of Music in 2013, the second prize of Osaka International Music Competition Piano J in 2014, and the third prize of Taiwan first prize music competition in 2014. She also won the concerto competition in YST and got the opportunity to play with the conservatory orchestra in the upcoming year.

Programme Notes

FRANCK

Prelude, Fugue et Variation for Organ in B Minor, Op.18 (transcription for solo piano by Harold Bauer)

Belgian composer, pianist, and organist César Franck (1822-1890) is known for his contrapuntally complicated music and his exceptional organ improvisational skills. As a composer, his fame rests mostly on his most famous compositions, including the Symphony in D Minor, Prelude, Chorale and Fugue for piano solo, and Sonata for Violin and Piano in A Major.

While Franck was working as an organist in the churches, his improvisations drew the attention from the public. Some of these improvisations were put onto paper, and among those were the Six Pièces pour Grand Orgue. The Six Pieces explored the possibilities of the Cavaillé-Coll organs, and established the unique French style of symphonic organ music. Prelude, Fugue, et Variation, Op. 18 is the third piece of the set, which was dedicated to the French composer, Camille Saint-Saëns. The neoclassicistic harmonic language in the piece carries some hints of Saint-Saëns's influence.

In this transcription by the English pianist Harold Bauer, the piano manages to imitate the rich sonorities of the organ. The Prelude introduces a melancholic but angelic, otherworldly tune, which may remind one of a majestic, spacious cathedral where the rich sonority of the organ resonates within. The Prelude ends in F# Minor, with a distant recall of the theme before the music sinks silently.

A sudden transition with fortissimo chords and cadenza-like arpeggios interrupts the solemn atmosphere. Here, Franck hints fragments of the fugue subject that is about to come.

The Fugue features crystal clear textures. As the fugue develops, voices are gradually pile up to result in a very thick texture. An allargando towards the end of the fugue leads it to a climax, before a low organ bass sounds to signify the beginning of the variation.

The Variation starts almost without the listener noticing, with an improvisatory passage that melts smoothly into the reprise of the Prelude's tune. However, Franck replaces the accompanying voices with flowing arpeggios. Towards the end of the piece, the tune comes

back one last time, now in the tonic key. It slowly gets farther and farther and finally disappears into nothingness.

LUTOSLAWSKI

Two Studies for Piano

Witold Roman Lutosławski is regarded as one of the major composers of the 20th century, and the most important Polish composer since Szymanowski, and Chopin. His early works were influenced by Polish folk music, but as he matured, his unique style emerged, often writing music based on intervals. He also embraced twelve-tone technique, atonality and aleatoric music.

These two etudes were written in 1940 and 1941, during the Nazi German occupation of Warsaw. Originally, Lutoslawski intended to compose a larger scale of studies, modelled on Chopin. However, he ended up writing only two studies. Both studies are based on intervals of fourths and fifths. The arpeggios in the first study, Allegro, which pay tribute to Chopin's Op.10 No.1, explore the melodic and harmonic intervals of a fourth and fifth. The second study, Non Troppo Allegro features a persistent perpetual motion of alternating fourths and fifths.

BRAHMS

Variations on a Theme of Paganini in A Minor, Op. 35, Book I

A lot of composers composed their own set of variations based on Niccolò Paganini's 24th Caprice, such as Liszt, Rachmaninoff, and Lutoslawski. Brahms, who was very masterful at traditional forms like the theme and variations, wrote two sets which he called "books". Unlike Liszt's and Lutoslawski's variations, Brahms's variations transform the theme in an absolutely original manner.

Although Brahms is not usually known for writing virtuosic pieces, this set of this set of variations is an exception. Also titled "Studies for Pianoforte", the taxing technical demands on the pianist were so difficult, that Clara Schumann once called it Hexenvariationen (Witch's Variations) and regretted it was out of her reach. However, the "studies" do not only focus on the technical challenges, but also on a greater emotional depth and scope.

Among the many technical and compositional devices that Brahms employs, the 14 variations and a coda feature a great variety of challenges, like double sixths (Variation I and II), imitation of the ricochet technique on the violin (Variation III), trills (Variation IV), wide leaps (Variation VII), syncopations (Variation VI and X), octave glissandi (Variation XIII), cross rhythm (Var V), and canon (Variation XII).

Programme notes by Kuo Lyu-Yan.