

May 8th, 2025 | 4:30pm | YST Concert Hall

JOURNEY

Piano Senior Recital by Olivia Wang Chien Jou



Works by

Chopin

Scriabin

Claude Debussy

William Gillock

Olivia Wang

*Special thanks to
Professor Albert Tiu*



YST
Yong Siew Toh
Conservatory
of Music

PROGRAMME

Claude Debussy - Suite Bergamasque

William Gallock - Moon light & Valse Etude

10mins intermission

Preludes selection

Scriabin prelude op.11 No.3 G major

Chopin Prelude op.28 No.3 G major

Scriabin prelude op.11 No.4 e minor

Chopin Prelude op.28 No.4 e minor

Scriabin prelude op.11 No.13 F# major

Chopin Prelude op.28 No.13 F# major

Scriabin prelude op.11 No.15 Db major

Chopin Prelude op.28 No.15 Db major

Olivia Wang Chien Jou - Journey

PROGRAM NOTES

Claude Debussy – Suite Bergamasque

Claude Debussy (1862–1918) is a pivotal figure in musical Impressionism. His Suite bergamasque, composed between 1890 and 1894 and published in 1905, reflects his early style and poetic sensibilities.

Though not technically demanding, the suite emphasizes tonal color and expressive subtlety. Debussy revised the suite before publication, giving titles to movements such as "Clair de lune." The suite's four movements—"Prélude," "Menuet," "Clair de lune," and "Passepied"—draw inspiration from Paul Verlaine's poetry and the Symbolist movement. The Prélude in F major opens with broad, resonant chords and features lyrical melodic lines.

The Menuet, in triple meter, is light and playful, blending modal harmonies with a touch of nostalgia in ternary form. The third movement, Clair de lune, is Debussy's most iconic piece. Inspired by Verlaine's poem of the same name, it evokes moonlight through gentle textures, soft pedal use, and a repeating bass figure, resembling a transformed sarabande. Finally, the Passepied adapts a Baroque dance into an unexpected 4/4 meter. Its rhythmic energy, folk-like melody, and mysterious middle section culminate in a playful closing reminiscent of "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star."



William Gillock – Moon Light & Valse Etude

William Gillock's "Moon Light & Valse Etude" presents a distinctive fusion of Romantic expressiveness and the vibrant pulse of contemporary piano writing. The piece is structurally bifurcated into two contrasting movements.

The "Moon Light" segment, rendered in B major, establishes an introspective nocturne-like atmosphere through its delicate, shimmering textures and gently unfolding dynamics. Although composed in a simpler idiom, it subtly references Debussy's "Clair de Lune"—notably through the bass line's characteristic motion from the third to the third—which casts an evocative, yet understated, homage.

In contrast, the "Valse Etude" infuses the work with buoyant, dance-like rhythms and demanding technical passages, evoking a reminiscence of the second movement from Rachmaninoff's Suite No.2 for two pianos, op. 17, transposed into a solo context. The interplay of light, agile running figures and formal structural balance conjures a sense of fanciful narrative, inviting creative interpretation from the performer.

Preludes Selection – Scriabin and Chopin

Artfully juxtaposing the piano preludes of Alexander Scriabin (1872–1915) and Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849), this selection forms a compelling comparative study that reveals the pioneering contributions of both composers to short-form piano literature. The paired works—from the G major preludes (Scriabin Op. 11 No. 3 and Chopin Op. 28 No. 3) to their counterparts in E minor, F# major, and D ♭ major—clearly illustrate their distinct aesthetic paradigms. Chopin's preludes are renowned for their refined lyricism, clear expressiveness, and profound Romantic introspection, skillfully balancing formal simplicity with substantial emotional weight, earning widespread acclaim.

In contrast, Scriabin's preludes exhibit a bolder experimentalism, characterized by an adventurous harmonic vocabulary and a near-synesthetic treatment of tonality, foreshadowing the musical language of the late Romantic era and beyond, presenting a mysterious and unique style. It is noteworthy that a significant connection exists between Scriabin's and Chopin's works. Scriabin's twenty-four preludes structurally and evidently draw inspiration from Chopin's "24 Preludes, Op. 28," both employing a sequence based on ascending fifths, indicating that Scriabin clearly considered Chopin's preludes during his compositional process. However, Scriabin's attitude towards this connection was complex; he emphatically stressed the originality of his own music, rather than it being a mere imitation of Chopin.

Olivia Wang Chien Jou – Journey

This piece is a reflection on life's journey – a path filled with many seasons. At the beginning, the constant flow of sixteenth notes represents the wheel of time, always turning, always moving forward. As the music unfolds, we encounter the variety of experiences that shape our lives: moments of joy, wonder, and magic, but also times of doubt, suffering, and waiting. Part of this piece was composed during a particularly difficult season in my own life. While preparing for an important audition, I injured my hands – a moment that left me feeling discouraged and trapped by the weight of perfectionism and unrealistic expectations. I had placed so much pressure on myself to succeed, and when things didn't go as planned, I struggled deeply. During that time, I began to reflect: What if I let go of those burdens and gave them to God? What if I simply did my best, and trusted Him with the rest? That perspective shift brought peace and a deeper understanding of grace.

In the final section of the piece, you will hear the melody of Amazing Grace, woven in as a musical reminder of the grace I've experienced through every part of the journey – both the beautiful and the broken.

Each of us is walking our own path, shaped by different seasons. I don't know which season you are in right now, but I hope this music invites you to reflect on your own journey – the joys, the struggles, the waiting – and recognize how each moment has helped shape who you are today. And maybe, just maybe, your story will become a blessing to someone else.