



YST
Yong Siew Toh
Conservatory
of Music

PIANO RECITAL

Chakrit Khanonvej

PERFORMING :

JOHANNES BRAHMS

VARIATIONS ON A THEME OF
PAGANINI OP. 35 BOOK I

MAURICE RAVEL

LA VALSE

26 . 11 . 2024 TUE 10 AM

YST CONCERT HALL

PROGRAMME NOTE

Johannes Brahms : Paganini Variations, Op. 35

Many composers have created their own versions of Niccolò Paganini's famous 24th Caprice for violin, including Liszt, Rachmaninoff, and Lutosławski. Brahms, who was a master of traditional forms like variations, wrote two sets of variations on this theme, which he called "books." While Liszt and Lutosławski kept much of Paganini's virtuosic style, Brahms' version offers a completely new and original take on the theme.

Although Brahms is not typically known for writing highly virtuosic piano works, the Paganini Variations is a notable exception. Also called Studies for Pianoforte, the piece is so technically demanding that Clara Schumann famously referred to it as Hexenvariationen (Witch's Variations), saying it was beyond her abilities. Yet, these "studies" are not just about technical difficulty; they also explore deep emotional expression and a wide range of musical ideas.

The 14 variations and a coda feature a range of technical challenges and musical techniques, such as double sixths (Variations I and II), mimicking the violin's ricochet technique (Variation III), trills (Variation IV), wide leaps (Variation VII), syncopations (Variations VI and X), octave glissandi (Variation XIII), cross rhythms (Variation V), and even a canon (Variation XII). Each variation offers a new way of transforming the theme, highlighting Brahms' creativity and technical skill.

Maurice Ravel : La Valse

Ravel was no stranger to dance forms in his music. Boléro, his most famous work by far, is based on a Spanish dance, and many of his early piano pieces were also based on Baroque dances. La Valse is no exception, similarly taking inspiration from the ballroom.

An earlier set of waltzes, the Valses nobles et sentimentales, used Schubert as the starting point. This grand orchestral waltz was originally conceptualised as a ballet called Vienne, and was intended as a homage to Johann Strauss II. However, there is more than a shade of Edgar Allan Poe, with its much darker overall mood, its atmosphere of uneasy sensuality, and its varied outbursts of increasing violence.

The low rumble of the opening sets the tone, and the struggles to really get going. With the low register mimicking low strings and bassoons, then some melody that present coupled with violas, present the first fragments of the waltz, but the harp-sound like arpeggio finally provides the impetus for the melodies to start coalescing into a theme.

Following this, we get a Straussian series of waltzes, contrasting loud and soft and each featuring different combinations of instruments.

The ballet character of the piece is immediately apparent: Ravel's mastery of contrast and colour means that the audience can almost see dancers before their eyes. Indeed, although Vienne never came to fruition, the music was irresistible to choreographers; Georges Balanchine created his own dance to it, as did the Englishman Frederick Ashton a few years later.

Sometimes sweet and sometimes sarcastic, the waltz carries on, with surprising interruptions by the sound that mimicking brass and cymbals.

Ravel then reprises the whole waltz once over, but in strange harmonies and keys. Things that are familiar become touched with something unclean, almost like Poe's The Masque of the Red Death. The music keeps up the whirling, ever faster, ever more frenziedly, and then...

"Through whirling clouds, waltzing couples may be faintly distinguished. The clouds gradually scatter: one sees at letter A an immense hall peopled with a whirling crowd.

The scene is gradually illuminated. The light of the chandeliers bursts forth at the fortissimo letter B. Set in an imperial court, about 1855." - Maurice Ravel



BIOGRAPHY

Chakrit Khanonvej commenced his piano studies at the age of five under the tutelage of Teerarat Sirasakulpat, where he garnered several accolades, including First Runner-Up at the ANZCA Modern Piano Competition and First Runner-Up at the Churairat Piano Competition 2016, among others.

Recognizing Chakrit's potential, Teerarat recommended him to continue his studies with Associate Professor Dr. Nopanand Chanorathaikul. Dr. Nopanand's mentorship was instrumental in furthering Chakrit's development in music.

During the years that he studied with Dr. Nopanand, Chakrit participated in a range of musical activities both domestically and internationally, earning prestigious awards such as the First Prize in the Thailand Steinway Piano Competition 2020, the First Runner-Up in the Singapore Piano Island Competition 2019, and the First Prize in the Bangkok International Piano Competition 2021. He also achieved top scores in Asia for the Advanced Certificate Piano Duet Examination of Trinity College London in 2018 and the ARSM Diploma Piano Examination of the ABRSM in 2019.

In addition to examinations and competitions, Dr. Nopanand encouraged Chakrit to participate in various Summer Music Camps and Masterclasses, including the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music Piano Academy in 2018 and 2019. These experiences provided Chakrit with the opportunity to study under distinguished pianists such as Mr. Albert Tiu and Dr. Thomas Hecht.

Chakrit successfully passed the highly competitive audition to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Piano Performance at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, National University of Singapore with full scholarship. In his first year, Chakrit studied with Mr. Albert Tiu. He is currently studying with Mr. Ning An.

Chakrit recently made his debut as a soloist with the Thai Youth Orchestra, performing to full-house audiences. He also had the honor of performing with the Thai Youth Orchestra again during the celebrations for King Rama X's birthday.

In addition to solo performance, Chakrit has a genuine passion for Collaborative Arts and Chamber Music. With highly talented classmates, he has performed as a member of a Piano Trio, a Piano Quartet, and a Piano Quintet performing in many venues in Singapore.

Chakrit aspires to become a professional musician who will inspire others, share his passion, and contribute significantly to the advancement of the classical music scene in Thailand.

