

25 November 2021 | THURSDAY

Wang Huang Hao Jia

Piano Recital

Programme

CHOPIN

Etude in C-sharp Minor, Op. 25 No. 7

DEBUSSY

Pour le piano

I. Prélude

II. Sarabande

III. Toccata

BRAHMS

Variations on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 35, Book 2

About The Performer

Hao Jia started his musical studies at the tender age of 5 when he enrolled in the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts School of Young Talents Gifted Young Pianists Course. He was under the tutelage of the Principal, Mdm Fang Yuan since 2011. Under her guidance, he won prizes in several competitions, most notably the grand prize in the 3rd Steinway Youth Piano Competition in 2016. He then represented Singapore in the Regional Finals where he achieved 3rd place. In 2017, he was accepted into Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, studying Piano Performance under Professor Albert Tiu. It is his dream to study in a music conservatory and he is loving the experience very much. He grew fond of accompaniment and chamber music in his studies in YST. He also grew a lot in terms of musicality and technique and won the 1st prize in the National Piano and Violin Competition (Senior category) in 2019. He will keep striving to achieve better results and sharpen his interpretations and understandings of music. Meanwhile, he is very excited to present his Junior Recital repertoire which consists of a wide variety of technique, colour and expression.

Programme Notes

CHOPIN

Etude in C-sharp Minor, Op. 25 No. 7

Depicting a cello in the bass melody, there seem to be a tragic conversation between the cello and the soprano. It starts with an expressive cadenza played by solo cello which conjures all the dark clouds before the conversation between the cello and soprano sets in. It starts cold, dark and melancholic as if it was mourning only to get agitated in just a few bars leading to the climax with running bass notes and a surprise modulation. To me, that feels like all the pain and sorrow have finally been released and the music brings us to this beautiful and heaven-like section. However, like all good things in life, they do not last long and slowly the tragic conversation returns, this time more desperate and frustrated than before. As if everything before was not painful enough, Chopin extends the final phrase with an excruciating set of circle of fifths as if he disallowed the pain to end before finally ending with the most hopeless sigh.

DEBUSSY

Pour le piano

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The Prélude starts *Assez animé et très rythmé* (With spirit and very rhythmically) before descending to a quasi-improvisatory section with an organ-like pedal point, seemingly echoing J.S. Bach's A minor organ Prelude BMV 543. The opening theme then comes back as strong chords, together with glissando runs that Debussy connected to "d'Artagnan drawing his sword". A strange whole tone section then creates a sense of mystery and unknown. The piece concludes with a cadenza full of glissando figurations and final chords suggesting the echoing sonority of a cathedral organ.

Sarabande is marked "Avec une élégance grave et lente" which translates to "With a slow and solemn elegance". Émile Vuillermoz described Debussy's playing of the movement as "with the easy simplicity of a good dancer from the sixteenth century". Apart from its grace and intimacy, the Sarabande displays a huge potential for a beautiful variety of orchestral colours and timbres, which resulted in Ravel's orchestration of it five years after Debussy's death in 1923.

The opening of the Toccata cheekily blends a fragment from Daquin's Le Coucou with the Prelude from Bach's E major solo violin Partita. This theme appears four times, each time grander than the previous with the final two in major, beaming with positivity. In the middle lies an atmospheric section that seems less toccata-like. It then starts to get more intense, building much tension before ending triumphantly with a stream of fortississimo chords.

BRAHMS

Variations on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 35, Book 2

Brahms in his Paganini variations directly engages himself with the brilliant, fiery virtuoso pianism of Liszt, an aesthetic with which he would not normally be associated. And when he did, he surpassed both Liszt and Schumann, who also wrote variations on this theme chosen from Paganini's most famous violin caprice, in both difficulty and content. They were composed for Carl Tausig, one of Liszt's most notable pupils, for whom Brahms had great admiration. Book II is generally gentler in character and focuses more on compositional virtues than on bravura writing compared to Book I. While some variations highlight particular technical problems, others, such as the "waltz" 4th variation are adaptations of the theme to popular styles. Rhythmic devices such as two-against-three are common with the most complex being No. 7 which features a three-against-four. No. 12 is the only variation that ventures away from the central key of A in the opus and is an absolutely beautiful nocturne.

Programme notes by Wang Huang Hao Jia.