



Evren Ozel, piano

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PROGRAM NOTES

Support for the program notes is generously provided by Roberta Viviano.

LEON KIRCHNER

(BROOKLYN, NY, 1919—NEW YORK, NY 2009)

Interlude II (2003)

In 1998, American composer Leon Kirchner was commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra to write a cantata-like opera. He called it “of things exactly as they are” and used American poetry as a “libretto” of sorts. Excerpts include the following:

(Emily Dickinson)

Were I with thee
Wild nights should be our luxury...

Rowing in Eden,
Ah the sea,
Might I but moor tonight
In thee.

(St. Vincent Millay)

Into my face a miracle
Of orchard breath and with the smell
I know not how such things can be
I breathe my soul back into me.

Kirchner himself claims that contained in this work for orchestra and chorus are the “seeds” for his Interlude II. The reflective and contemplative nature of the poetry is felt in the gestural, terse, flowing work for solo piano. Cascades of notes and colorful pauses permeate this six-minute masterpiece.

ROBERT SCHUMANN

(ZWICKAU, SAXONY, 1810–ENDENICH, NEAR BONN, 1856)

Kreisleriana, Op. 16 (1838, rev. 1850)

Robert Schumann’s piano music often explores the dichotomy between his two creative personalities: the boisterous Florestan, and the tender Eusebius. The eight-movement *Kreisleriana* does so while considering E.T.A. Hoffman’s character, the manic Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler, a reckless violinist who drank heavily and behaved poorly in public. Robert wanted his beloved, the pianist and composer Clara Wieck, to believe that she was his principal source of inspiration, rather than his manic side, but with the ferocity of this piece, he was not very convincing. Upon first reading the score, Clara wrote, “Sometimes your music actually frightens me, and I wonder: is it really true that a creator of such things is going to become my husband?”

Schumann was very well-read and knew literature exceptionally well. According to some, *Kreisleriana* actually takes the form of a double novel, based on a particular book in which one chapter is told through the eyes of Kreisler, and the next through the lens of a cat, lazily lounging about, without a care in the world. Hyper and spooky fast movements are followed by simple, songful slow movements. Sharp character contrasts and profound moments of repose make this work a staple of the piano literature.

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

(SAINT-GERMAIN-EN-LAYE, 1862–PARIS, 1918)

Six Preludes from Book II (1912 – 1913)

“There is no theory. You merely have to listen. Pleasure is the law!”
– Claude Debussy

Johann Sebastian Bach wrote an enormous number of preludes

throughout his life, but his preludes most often preceded fugues, or preceded dance movements like Allemandes, Courantes, or Giges. Taking inspiration from Bach's use of the form in his 48 Preludes and Fugues of the Well-Tempered Clavier, Frederic Chopin wrote his iconic set of 24 Preludes, Op. 28. These were preludes that didn't precede another form of composition – they simply existed as preludes.

Following suit, Debussy wrote 24 Preludes himself, split into two volumes of 12 Preludes each. In Debussy's elevation of the genre, these pieces did not exist simply as abstract preludes, they took on a programmatic aspect as well. Each of his preludes reveals its creative title at the bottom of the page, which alludes to a story, or a work of art, or something else that served as the inspiration for the piece.

Among the six preludes on this program are: *Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses* ("The fairies are exquisite dancers"), inspired by an Arthur Rackham drawing of J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan; *General Lavine – eccentric*, a portrait of a hobbling, quirky, comedic clown by the name of Ed Lavine, who appeared in Paris in 1912 billed as "the man who soldiered all his life"; as well as *La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune* ("The terrace of moonlit audiences"), inspired by an article in 1912 about the coronation of George V as Emperor of India.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

(BONN, 1770–VIENNA, 1827)

Piano Sonata No. 32 in C minor, Op. 111

Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 32, his final word on the genre, goes from painful strife to blissful surrender over the course of its two movements.

Crisp rhythm and sharp articulation define the bulk of the first movement, beginning with the stormy octaves of the introductory *Maestoso*, and leading into the pointed principal theme of the *Allegro con brio ed appassionato*. A brief sojourn away from C minor into A-flat major brings a glimmer of hope, only to be shattered by another clattering diminished harmony. The fughetta in the development section brings a mysterious quality to the music. As the movement seems to approach a catastrophic close, nobody expects the

surprise codetta – one last appeal for hope before drifting off into silence.

If crisp dotted-rhythm figures were a key characteristic of the first movement, the heavenly *Arietta* that follows loosens the chains to begin with. A soft chorale in C major, *Adagio molto semplice e cantabile*, looks back on a lifetime of pain and suffering and simply appreciates the moment of repose, taking a chance to be enveloped in warmth. While it is not labeled as such, this final movement takes the form of a theme and variations, with some liberties taken here and there. In the first couple of variations, the momentum gradually begins to intensify and by variation three, a joyful celebration ensues that possesses a quasi-boogie-woogie feel. After this, a more static pulse governs for the rest of the movement, and Beethoven begins to move in and out of the variation format. It slowly builds in energy and volume toward a great emotional summit in C major, which goes as far as to land on the dominant chord with a buzzing trill – surely triumph is upon us. But alas, the trill gets softer, and Beethoven adds one final variation, and with the trill still glistening on top, the chorale theme appears once again over a shimmering harmony. According to pianist Jonathan Biss, the *Arietta* is a movement that just can't seem to finish, lasting nearly 18 minutes and without a single solid cadence until the very end of the piece. After all that has ensued, Beethoven ends the work with the simplest resignation into C major, a gesture of gratitude as a culmination of the journey.

Program Notes by Evren Ozel.