Seong-Jin Cho

WHEN:
SUNDAY,
OCTOBER 21, 2018
2:30 PM

VENUE:
BING
CONCERT HALL
About the Program

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1918)

Images (Book One), L. 110 (1905)

Debussy liked the word 'Image.' It provided a framework that is difficult to pin down in words. His titles are often reflections upon the music itself, rather than statements describing what the music is 'about.' Debussy valued his Images highly, telling his publisher, Jacques Durand: "I think I may say without undue pride that I believe these pieces will live and will take their place in the piano literature …either to the left of Schubert, or to the right of Chopin." Water was, of course, a much-loved theme of the Impressionist painters and it posed a challenge to Debussy when he tried to capture its essence on paper. Pianist Marguerite Long writes that Debussy likened the opening motif in Reflections in the water to "a little circle in water with a little pebble falling into it." In this wonderful tone poem, the rippling and shimmer of light have a hypnotic effect and build to a formidable climax, dying away on ripples of sound. Homage to

Program

"Images," Book 1 (1905)
- Reflets dans l'eau
- Hommage à Rameau
- Mouvement

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Ballade No. 3 (1841)
Polonaise Fantasy, Op. 61 (1846)

Intermission

"Images," Book 2 (1907)
- Cloches à travers les feuilles
- Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fût
- Poissons d'or

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

Piano Sonata No. 3 in B minor, Op. 58 (1844)
- Allegro maestoso
- Scherzo. Molto vivace.
- Largo
- Finale. Presto non tanto; Agitato

Seong-Jin Cho will be available to sign CDs and programs following the performance.

Seong-Jin Cho records exclusively for Deutsche Grammophon.

For more information on Seong-Jin Cho, visit www.seongjin-cho.com.

Management for Seong-Jin Cho: Primo Artists, New York, NY

PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE. Please be considerate of others and turn off all phones, pagers, and watch alarms. Photography and recording of any kind are not permitted. Thank you.

Upcoming Events

Tickets and information: live.stanford.edu

Beethoven Meets Frankenstein
Nov 3 • 7:30 PM
Bing Studio

The Routes of Slavery
Nov 4 • 4:00 PM
Bing Concert Hall
Rameau was written when Debussy was editing an edition of a Rameau ballet. It’s more of a tribute to the 18th-century French composer than an imitation of his style and contains the directions “Slow and grave, in the style of a sarabande, but without rigour.” The final piece in the collection, a brilliant toccata titled Movement, is pure shimmering virtuosity, built around a non-to-slow-moving harmonic bass, which looks forward to the rhythmically-driven piano music that Bartók and Stravinsky would write a short generation later.

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810-1849)
Ballade No. 3, in A-flat, Op. 47 (1841)
Polonaise-Fantaisie in A-flat, Op. 61 (1846)

With its origins in narrative poetry and folk song, and its use to describe such 19th century songs as Schubert’s The Erl-King, Chopin began to use the title Ballade for piano music in 1831. All four Chopin Ballades are single-movement, extended piano compositions with an implied storyline. They draw on the idea of contrasting and reconciling opposites—the basis of the sonata principle. This becomes clear in the Ballade No. 3, Op. 47 where two contrasting themes are fused into a third. Essays have been written on the way Chopin transforms the themes of this ballade, a true example of art concealing art. Yet it is a mark of the strength of Chopin’s creative powers in 1841 that the Third Ballade flows with natural momentum and strikes us as the most romantic of the set.

Chopin wrote close to 20 Polonaises and they express the noblest traditional feelings of Poland and the purest type of national character. As though acknowledging the distance he had traveled from the peasant origins of the dance, Chopin calls his final work in the genre Polonaise-Fantaisie in A-flat. His use of the word ‘Fantasy’ in the title reflects a freer form, but a nationalistic feeling remains in the music. Alongside it, we also get a more deeply felt and personal side of Chopin—what has been called ‘Chopin the suffering man.’ This is represented in the nostalgia of the first melody, on which much of the piece is based. Links can be found between all the themes of this work. The harmonies are restless and shift constantly. The music is carefully constructed yet it still manages to create the impression of spontaneous improvisation. Its conclusion is triumphant.

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1918)
Images (Book Two), L. 111 (1907)

The first piece in Book Two of Debussy’s Images is the evocative Bells [heard] through the leaves. It incorporates a whole-tone scale, on which Debussy’s entire musical structure is built, together with bell overtones and multi-layered textures to summon impressions of distant tolling bells, heard beyond a landscape of rustling leaves. The title of the oriental-colored And the moon sets over the temple that was is believed to have been proposed by its dedicatee, Louis Laloy, after the piece was composed. The piece suggests serenity and stillness, colored by echoes of the gamelan. The technically demanding third Image, Goldfish, is believed to have been inspired by a Japanese lacquer painting, showing two darting goldfish in rippling water. Its synthesis of trills, tremolos and a toccata-style of keyboard writing produces vivid illustrative effects, as pianistic bravura transcends technical challenges.

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810-1849)
Sonata No. 3, in B minor, Op. 58 (1844)

In 1844, Chopin was 34 and at the peak of his genius. He wrote his third and final piano sonata during a last, happy summer spent with the novelist George Sand, at Nohant in France. Here, free from the need to support himself and teach, he was able to concentrate on composition. The B minor Sonata, arguably his most successful large-scale work, begins with a proud, heroic flourish. A second theme introduces a nocturnal mood. Both themes are amongst Chopin’s finest, capable of the gentlest expression and the most exhilarating virtuoso development. At the same time, Chopin writes more contrapuntally here than in any other piece. His veneration for the music of Bach, which he played daily, underlines every bar, the learning masked in the romantic surge of the music. After the grand scale of the opening movement, the Scherzo comes in complete contrast, as a fine example of the sort of shimmering right-hand piano playing with which Chopin used to dazzle his audiences. The slow movement is a glorious Italian aria, where the voice floats effortlessly over the accompaniment and the mood is positive and radiant in feeling. After the calm repose, the finale is an exultant rondo which increases in intensity with each return of the theme. The excitement builds to a final stretto—an operatic device that Chopin adapts to great effect, in which the tempo quickens to a dazzling conclusion.

—Program notes © 2018 Keith Horner.
Seong-Jin Cho

With an overwhelming talent and innate musicality, Seong-Jin Cho is rapidly embarking on a world-class career and considered one of the most distinctive artists of his generation. His thoughtful and poetic, assertive and tender, virtuosic and colorful playing can combine panache with purity and is driven by an impressive natural sense of balance.

Cho was brought to the world’s attention in Fall 2015 when he won the coveted Gold Medal at the Chopin International Competition in Warsaw. This same competition launched the careers of world-class artists such as Martha Argerich, Maurizio Pollini, Garrick Ohlsson and Krystian Zimerman. Within one month, a recording of Cho’s live competition highlights was rush-released by Deutsche Grammophon, propelling the pianist to pop-star status in South Korea. The album achieved multi-platinum sales within a week of its release and triggered a sales frenzy at stores across the country. It reached No. 1 in the nation’s pop album chart and has sold well over 150,000 copies to date worldwide.

In January 2016, following on the success of the debut disc, Cho signed an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon. The first recording was released in November 2016 featuring Chopin’s First Concerto with the London Symphony Orchestra and Gianandrea Noseda at the Barbican Centre, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France and Myung-Whun Chung at the Paris Philharmonie, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra with Antonio Pappano, Hong Kong Philharmonic with Jaap van Zweden, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra with Manfred Honeck, Finnish Radio Orchestra and Hannu Lintu, Philadelphia Orchestra and Yannick Nézet-Seguin and Orchestra della Scala with Myung-Whun Chung. He will tour with the European Union Youth Orchestra and Gianandrea Noseda to venues like Amsterdam’s Concertgebouw, Royal Albert Hall, Berlin Konzerthaus; London Philharmonic Orchestra and Robin Ticciati in Germany; WDR Sinfonieorchester and Marek Janowski in Germany and Japan; and the Orchestra dell’Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia and Antonio Pappano in Asia.

In November 2017, Cho stepped in for Lang Lang and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra for sold-out concerts with Sir Simon Rattle in Berlin, Frankfurt, Hong-Kong and Seoul. Other major orchestral appearances include the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Mariinsky Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic Orchestra, Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Budapest Festival Orchestra, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Russian National Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester, RAI Symphony Orchestra and Hessischer Rundfunk Sinfonieorchester.