

Linda Holzer, piano
University of Arkansas-Little Rock
March 12, 2010 SBSCH 8 PM

Program:

Sonata in B minor, K. 27/L. 449
Sonata in B minor, K. 87/L. 33

Domenico Scarlatti
(1685-1757)

Partita in D, BWV 828

Overture
Allemande
Courante
Aria
Sarabande
Menuet
Gigue

JS Bach
(1685-1750)

Intermission

Clair de lune
from Images, Bk I
Reflets dans l'eau
Hommage à Rameau

Claude Debussy
(1862-1918)

Fantaisie-Improvisation, Op. posth. 66
Nocturne in D-flat, Op. 27 # 2

Frederic Chopin
(1810-1849)

Prelude in E-flat, Op. 23 #6
Prelude in B-flat Op. 23 #2

Sergei Rachmaninoff
(1873-1943)

Program Notes by Linda Holzer

Domenico Scarlatti was an Italian composer who spent much of his adult life in Portugal and Spain, where he was employed as music master at the court of Princess Maria Barbara, later Queen of Spain. He was famous for his skills as a harpsichordist and composer, and wrote more than 550 keyboard sonatas for the musical enjoyment of the royal court. Baroque audiences loved the music; Scarlatti was popular and famous in his own time.

In the preface to a publication of some of his pieces in 1738, Scarlatti addressed his audience thoughtfully about his hopes for their enjoyment of his music:

*Reader,
Whether you be Dilettante or Professor, in these Compositions do not expect any profound
Learning, but rather an ingenious Jestings with Art. . . Show yourself then more human than critical
and thereby increase your own Delight.*



Johann Sebastian Bach excelled beyond the scope of the finest composers in the recorded history of Western Art Music. He was a genius among geniuses. Born to a musical family in Eisenach, Germany, after an intensive musical education among his extended family following the death of both his parents, he launched himself on a successful career as an organist, composer, and music director. He perfected Baroque counterpoint.

The Partita in D was composed in 1726, and is a suite of French dances that would have been familiar to Baroque audiences. In Bach's hands, the music is by turns majestic, graceful, dramatic, and triumphant.

Photographs in the slideshow that accompanies this performance of the partita were taken by Peggy Harstvedt in Canyonlands (southern Utah); The Painted Desert (Arizona); Sedona (Arizona); Grand Canyon, North Rim (Arizona); and Tucumcari (New Mexico). The spacious grandeur of the Southwestern United States landscapes has a kinship with the soaring musical lines of Bach.



The life of Claude Debussy, 1862-1918, bridges two centuries. In our time, his music is so famous (there are hundreds of different recordings available of such beloved pieces as *Claire de lune*) that it may be hard to imagine that there was a time when Debussy was considered a musical rebel. As a student at the Paris Conservatoire de Musique, Debussy was constantly crossing boundaries of style, much to the disappointment of his professors, who had hoped he would be content to carry forward the mantle of respected composers of the Romantic era. Debussy drew upon diverse international and historical influences, from the Renaissance, music of the Orient, and ancient Greece, to the novel textures of Javanese gamelan music, a kind of Asian percussion music which he first heard at the World's Fair in Paris in 1889.

Claude Debussy created an evocative style that was uniquely his own. Some have categorized his music as French Impressionism, which was the label applied to a style of painting at the time. Debussy himself preferred to think of his music as being related to the poetry of the Symbolist poets of his day, such as Verlaine and Mallarmé. The poem *Clair de lune*, written by Debussy's contemporary, Paul Verlaine, translates:

“Your soul is an exquisite landscape that bergamasks have charmed.
Enchanting bands playing the lute and dancing to escape
The sadness left untouched by mummers' hands.

Chanting the while upon the minor mode of happy love and of life's long delight
Shyly they tread upon the happy road
And their sweet sighs in the moonlight.

In sad moonlight, serene in its beauty, birds cease their song and dream under its spell;
And graceful waters sob in ecstasy
Surging from the marble in which they dwell.”
(Anna Balakian, trans.)

Reflets dans l'eau (Reflections in the water) is a musical depiction of the play of light and water. Written in 1905, the piece is the first in a set of three works entitled *Images. Hommage à Rameau* was, as the title suggests, written to honor the memory of Jean-Philippe Rameau, a famous musician of pre-Revolutionary France. Debussy was a great admirer of Rameau's music, and in this tender, wistful piece, seems almost to lay a wreath at the tomb of his esteemed countryman.



Frédéric Chopin has been called the Poet of the Piano; no other composer is more closely associated with the instrument than he. Chopin's reputation rests largely on his Romantic character pieces--nocturnes, mazurkas, preludes, ballades, scherzos, fantasies, polonaises, waltzes. He was a contemporary of Liszt, and was well-known within the major artistic and aristocratic circles of Parisian society. Both men were child prodigies on the piano. Unlike Liszt, Chopin was rather shy, and withdrew from the life of a touring artist. Instead, he made his living as a piano teacher and a composer.



Rachmaninoff was born in Russia and received his musical training at the St. Petersburg Conservatory and the Moscow Conservatory. Upon graduation, he was awarded the customary title for all conservatory graduates, "Free Artist." Such a title was to be both a blessing and a trial for him. Ultimately, he was forced to leave Russia following the Revolution of 1917 in order to preserve his artistic freedom of expression.

Rachmaninoff had a gift for creating lyrical, Romantic melodies, scoring them in luxuriant, colorful harmonies, and projecting great dramatic intensity. He was greatly influenced by the Slavic traditions of his native Russia, particularly the style of music used in the Russian Orthodox Church. He wrote with innate sensitivity for the piano, and published numerous works that were initially written for his own performance on the concert stages of the world.

Once asked to define music, Rachmaninoff subsequently wrote:

"What is music!?! How *can* one define it? Music is a calm moonlit night, a rustling of summer foliage. Music is the distant peal of bells at eventide! Music is born only in the heart and it appeals only to the heart; it is Love! The sister of Music is Poetry, and its mother is Sorrow!"

About the Artist

Pianist [Linda Holzer](#) is a professor of music at the University of Arkansas-Little Rock. An active soloist and chamber musician, Dr. Holzer has been heard in concert in more than 20 states, including at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, and New York Public Radio Station WNYC-FM, as well as abroad at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Palfy Palace in Bratislava, Slovakia, and the Landstrasse Gymnasium in Vienna, Austria. She holds degrees in piano performance from Northwestern University (Evanston, Illinois), the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Florida State University (Tallahassee, FL). She currently serves as chair of the Committee on the Pedagogy Student for the [2009 National Conference on Keyboard Pedagogy](#), and is also an active member of the [Network of Music Career Development Officers \(NETMCDO\)](#). She is featured on [Podsafe Music Network](#), and is an active member of Chamber Music America, the College Music Society, and the Music Teachers National Association and serves as the chair of the College Faculty Forum for the Arkansas State Music Teachers Association. Recent performances have included concerts at Missouri State University, Wichita State University, and the University of Alabama-Huntsville. This May she travels to mainland China for a concert at Qingdao University.