



**VCU DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC
FACULTY RECITAL**

Russell Wilson, Piano

Sunday, November 18, 2018 at 7 p.m.

Sonia Vlahcevic Concert Hall | W. E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts
922 Park Avenue | Richmond, Va.

Prelude and Fugue No. XV in G major
from W.T.C Book I J.S. Bach (1685 – 1750)

Barcarolle Op. 60 F. Chopin (1810 – 1849)

Excursions Op. 20 S. Barber (1910 – 1981)
Un poco allegro
In slow blues tempo
Allegretto
Allegro molto

INTERMISSION

Faschingsschwang aus Wien Op. 26 R. Schumann (1810 – 1856)
Allegro
Romanze
Scherzino
Intermezzo
Finale

Program Notes

The Well-Tempered Clavier often acts as a kind of bible for many pianists because it is a timeless work transcending its history and is capable of reaching a wide spectrum of generations and music fans. Generally, it is regarded as one of the most influential works in the history of Western Classical Music, and is steeped in vast cosmic levels that even the pianist who has heard and played it hundreds of times, finds new 'voices' in the work.

Believe it or not, Bach's style went out of favor in the time around his death, and most music in the early Classical period had neither contrapuntal complexity nor a great variety of keys. But with the maturing of the Classical style in the 1770s the W.T.C. began to influence the course of musical history with Haydn and Mozart studying these works more closely. Structurally, the Preludes are formally free, meaning certain rhythmic liberties may be taken with regards to melodic enhancement. The Fugue, on the other hand exhibits a kind of on-going drive that has a sense of buoyant swing. My decision to program this work is mainly due to my continued fascination of Bach and in following Bach's reason for composing them: "for the profit and use of musical youth desirous of learning, and especially for the pastime of those already skilled in this study."

The faultless grace of Chopin's piano writing, his personal stamp and his preeminent position as a composer make his works a sine qua non for all pianists and piano teachers. The Barcarolle is a title given to pieces which imitate or suggest the songs sung by Venetian gondoliers as they propel their boats through the water. The boat movement is best recognized by the time signature of 6/8 which provides a lilting, undulating rhythm. Chopin, however, chooses 12/8 instead of the customary 6/8 time signature. Also, typical of Chopin's writing is the sensuous arabesque-like melodic contours, lyrical beauty and rich harmonies that prevail in this Italianate melody. Compared to the Nocturnes, the Barcarolle is less intimate, but more expansive, and yet still belongs to the nocturnal world than to any other genre.

Barber's Excursions consist of four short pieces based on a folk tune or idiom and captures some slice of Americana. The first movement depicts the hustling pace of city life with catchy, syncopated rhythms, jazzy playfulness and motor-rhythmic drive. If you listen closely you might (as I imagined) hear a boogie-woogie ostinato pattern in the left hand that lends itself to being in the night spots of the time. The second movement, "In Slow Blues Tempo," has a bluesy manner to be sure, but is also sassy and spiky with suggested twangy guitar sounds. The third movement, a set of variations on The Streets of Laredo, is mainly a lullaby. The final movement, Allegro molto is definitely a hoe-down type of barn dance somewhat reminiscent of Copland's Rodeo, but jazzier and more amusingly mischievous. Robert Schumann's Faschingschwank aus Wien is a rather unusual work in five movements and is more integrated than a suite, but not quite a sonata. It serves as a partial attempt from Schumann in response to a wishful thought from his wife Clara, that he write some music for her to play in Paris: "listen Robert, won't you for once compose something brilliant and easy to understand, something that is a complete and coherent piece without special titles, not too long and not too short? I would so much like to have something of yours to play in public, something written for an audience. I know this is degrading for a genius, but once in a while, it would be the politic thing to do."

The opening Allegro contains a cleverly disguised quotation of "La Marseillaise," a greeting to Clara in Paris. It was also Schumann's way of thumbing his nose at the Austrian censors who had given him such a hard time, since under Metternich playing the French National Anthem was strictly forbidden. The opening Allegro is very nearly a dance suite in and of itself with the principal idea in $\frac{3}{4}$ time alternating with six contrasting episodes. The second movement, quite wistful and characteristic, is a brief Romanze in G minor. The third movement, Scherzino in B flat major, is a scherzo (sans trio) that has a catchy tune (one that wants to be whistled) and is laid out in continuous two bar phrases. This is Schumann fulfilling Clara's wish. The third movement, Intermezzo in E flat minor, the most distinctive movement and rather gloomy, is undoubtedly the most passionate melody filled with yearning, seductive moments. The undulating, agitated accompaniment adds a restlessness to the texture but is never intended to overwhelm the listener. The Finale in B flat major, is an extended movement in sonata form with two interrelated themes and a complicated development section. It is also the most technically demanding of the movements.