

Lincoln Center's 2018/19 GREAT PERFORMERS

The Program

Sunday, May 19, 2019 at 11:00 am

Sunday Morning Coffee Concerts

Francesco Piemontesi, *Piano*

BACH *Italian Concerto, BWV 971 (1725)*

[Allegro]

Andante

Presto

DEBUSSY *Images, Book II (1907)*

Cloches à travers les feuilles

Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut

Poissons d'or

RACHMANINOFF *Piano Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor, Op. 36 (1913, rev. 1931)*

Allegro agitato

Non allegro—Lento

Allegro molto

This program is approximately one hour long and will be performed without intermission.

Please join us for a cup of coffee following the performance.

Please make certain all your electronic devices are switched off.

This performance is made possible in part by the Josie Robertson Fund for Lincoln Center.

Steinway Piano
Walter Reade Theater

Great Performers

Support is provided by Rita E. and Gustave M. Hauser, The Shubert Foundation, The Katzenberger Foundation, Inc., Audrey Love Charitable Foundation, Great Performers Circle, Lincoln Center Spotlight, Chairman's Council, and Friends of Lincoln Center

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UPCOMING GREAT PERFORMERS EVENTS:

Sunday, May 19 at 3:00 pm in David Geffen Hall

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra

Manfred Honeck, conductor

Till Fellner, piano

BEETHOVEN: Piano Concerto No. 5 ("Emperor")

MAHLER: Symphony No. 5

For tickets, call (212) 721-6500 or visit LCGreatPerformers.org. Call the Lincoln Center Info Request Line at (212) 875-5766 to learn about program cancellations or to request a Great Performers brochure.

Visit LCGreatPerformers.org for more information relating to this season's programs.

Join the conversation: @LincolnCenter

We would like to remind you that the sound of coughing and rustling paper might distract the performers and your fellow audience members.

In consideration of the performing artists and members of the audience, those who must leave before the end of the performance are asked to do so between pieces. The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are not allowed in the building.

By Kathryn L. Libin

Italian Concerto, BWV 971 (1725)

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Born March 21, 1685, in Eisenach, Germany

Died July 28, 1750, in Leipzig

Approximate length: 13 minutes

As a youthful harpsichordist and organist in Weimar, Johann Sebastian Bach became intrigued by the concertos of Antonio Vivaldi, whose Op. 3 collection *L'estro armonico* ("Harmonic Inspiration") circulated widely after it appeared in 1711. Vigorous, tuneful, and formally well designed, these concertos appealed so much to Bach that he transcribed several of them for solo keyboard. In later years the Italian style remained an important influence. In 1731 Bach published the first part of his famed *Clavier-Übung* in Leipzig. Far more than the "exercises" that the title implies, this massive three-part collection represents the pinnacle of Bach's work for keyboard. The second part of the series, dating from 1735, contained the "Concerto in the Italian Style," BWV 971; here the lessons Bach learned from Vivaldi reached their full-est integration with his own complex contrapuntal procedures.

While Vivaldi's concertos featured a soloist with ensemble (or *tutti*), Bach's concerto emulates the interplay of those contrasting forces upon a single keyboard instrument. In Bach's own sphere, a two-manual harpsichord, with its built-in contrasts of timbre and register, would have made the mimicry of concerto dialogue a relatively easy matter; but a modern pianist must pay special attention to dynamics in order to achieve Bach's implied solo and tutti effects. In the work's forceful, chordal opening, one may readily imagine the full orchestra, whose string players spin out the main motives for the first 30 bars. At the entrance of the "soloist," Bach indicates a *piano* dynamic in the left hand and *forte* in the right, along with a new tune and gentle accompaniment. Bach provides a lyrical and somewhat melancholy *Andante* in D minor for the central movement, and concludes with an agile, joyous finale. A critic of that era, J.A. Scheibe, took Bach to task for publishing keyboard music that was "extremely difficult to play," but in a 1739 review of this work, he proclaimed it "the perfect model of a well-designed solo concerto." Bach's technical demands are an essential aspect of a music that is supremely idiomatic for the keyboard, powerfully expressive, and exhilarating to perform and to hear."

Images, Book II (1907)

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Born August 22, 1862, in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France

Died March 25, 1918, in Paris

Approximate length: 15 minutes

Claude Debussy studied piano and composition at the Paris Conservatory, where he enrolled as a boy and remained for 11 years. While this would constitute his only formal education, as an adult he became a voracious consumer of poetry, other literature, and visual art. In 1884 he won the highest honor that the Conservatory bestowed, the Prix de Rome; as its recipient Debussy went to Rome for an extended stay, but by 1887 he had returned to his quiet life of composing in Paris. During his early years he composed a great many songs, but the work that established his reputation was the opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*, produced in 1901. In succeeding years compositions like the orchestral triptych *La mer* and the two books of *Images* for piano brought him success and fame. The piano was Debussy's instrument, and in public he played mostly his own works and those of Chopin; indeed, the preludes and etudes of Chopin likely inspired Debussy to write his own comparable series.

Debussy's piano music is remarkable for its refined palette of colors and timbres, and usually offers evocative titles for contemplation along with the music, underlining Debussy's predilection for poetic and visual imagery. Debussy composed two sets of *Images*, the first completed in 1905 and the second in 1907. The opening piece of Book II, *Cloches à travers les feuilles* ("Bells through the leaves"), alludes both to ringing sonority and flickering light, with multiple lines in the texture that must be precisely etched, *pianissimo*, by the pianist. The second piece, *Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut* ("And the moon descends on the temple that was") offers rich, harmonically unconventional chordal textures that move softly and slowly. In *Poissons d'Or* ("Gold fish"), the final piece in the set, Debussy alludes to a painting in Japanese lacquer, depicting two golden carp, that held a place in his study. The sense of watery motion and filtered light derives from incessant tremolo figures, played "as lightly as possible" beneath the melodic line.

Piano Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor, Op. 36 (1913, rev. 1931)

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

Born April 1, 1873, in Oneg, Russia

Died March 28, 1943, in Beverly Hills

Approximate length: 22 minutes

Sergei Rachmaninoff ranked as one of the greatest pianists of his day, as well as an innovative composer whose virtuosic music made him a celebrated recitalist in his own time. Apart from Stravinsky, he was the only Russian of his generation to achieve international renown; but unlike Stravinsky, he worked entirely within the Romantic tradition, never giving up the tonal or formal conventions of the 19th-century music he had studied at the Moscow Conservatory.

In the 1890s Rachmaninoff established himself as a respected composer in Moscow, writing his first symphony as well as piano music, and expanding his sphere of activity as an opera conductor. His international career as a conductor and piano virtuoso began with a trip to London in 1899, where he performed in concerts of his own works. Over the next several years Rachmaninoff gradually established a balance between an exhausting performing schedule and quiet summers in the countryside when he composed. He began sketching his Sonata in B-flat minor, Op. 36, during a stay in Rome. At the same time he was working on his Op. 35 choral symphony, “The Bells,” and one seems to have spilled into the other, since bell effects resound in the sonata as well. The sonata comprises three movements that are linked by common ideas—especially a descending chromatic line from the opening—as well as by material that bridges the usual gaps between each section.

Rachmaninoff was a formidable pianist himself, and his piano music poses substantial difficulties for performers. The chromatic melody from the first movement re-emerges in the second with the rich sonority of Russian church bells, including an allusion to one of Rachmaninoff’s emblematic motives, the *Dies Irae* (“Day of wrath”) of the Requiem mass. Though the sonata was completed in 1913, Rachmaninoff remained dissatisfied with this complex and challenging work, complaining that it seemed too long and too “busy.” He finally submitted it to a thorough revision in 1931, excising many passages and thinning the densely knit texture. His close friend, pianist Vladimir Horowitz, knew both versions and decided, with Rachmaninoff’s approval, to combine what he thought were the best elements of both. To this day pianists may choose between one version or the other, or even, as Van Cliburn and others have done, follow Horowitz’s lead and devise their own. It remains one of the great masterpieces of Russian Romanticism.

Musicologist Kathryn L. Libin teaches music history and theory at Vassar College.



MARCO BORGGREVE

Francesco Piemontesi

Widely renowned for his interpretation of the Classical and early Romantic repertoire, Francesco Piemontesi's pianism and sensibility also has a close affinity with the later 19th and 20th-century repertoire of Brahms, Liszt, Dvořák, Ravel, Debussy, Bartók, and beyond. Mr. Piemontesi says that Alfred Brendel, one of his most influential mentors, taught him "to love the detail of things."

He appears worldwide with such conductors as Zubin Mehta, Iván Fischer, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Gianandrea Noseda, Mark Elder, Manfred Honeck, Pablo Heras-Casado, and Andrew Manze, and with major orchestras including the London Symphony and Philharmonia Orchestras, Budapest Festival Orchestra, Czech Philharmonic, Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig, Munich Philharmonic, Berlin, Bavarian, and Frankfurt Radio symphony orchestras, Orchestre National de France, Cleveland Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and NHK Symphony Orchestra, among others.

Highlights of his 2018–19 season include debuts with the Boston Symphony Orchestra (Manze), National Symphony Orchestra (Noseda), and the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen (Roger Norrington) as well as returns to the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Oslo Philharmonic, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, and Scottish Chamber Orchestra. In August 2018 Mr. Piemontesi launched a major Schubert cycle at the Schubertiade and returned to the Salzburg Festival and the Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival. In recital he appears this season at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London and Herbst Theatre in San Francisco.

In chamber music, Mr. Piemontesi plays with a variety of partners, including Leif Ove Andsnes, Renaud and Gautier Capuçon, Christian Tetzlaff, Tabea Zimmermann, and the Emerson Quartet. His recordings include Liszt's First (2018) and Second (2019) Books of *Années de pèlerinage*, accompanied by documentaries by filmmakers Bruno Monsaingeon and Roberta Pedrini, respectively, on double CDs and DVDs for Orfeo. Other recordings include Mozart Piano Concertos Nos. 25 and 26 with the Scottish Chamber

Orchestra and Andrew Manze on Linn, and for Naïve he has recorded Debussy Préludes, Mozart solo piano works, and Schumann and Dvořák Piano Concertos with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Jiří Bělohlávek.

Born in Locarno, Switzerland, Mr. Piemontesi studied with Arie Vardi before working with Alfred Brendel, Murray Perahia, Cécile Ousset, and Alexis Weissenberg. He rose to international prominence with prizes at several major competitions, including the 2007 Queen Elisabeth Competition, and between 2009-11 he was chosen as a BBC New Generation Artist. Since 2012, Mr. Piemontesi has been the artistic director of the Settimane Musicali di Ascona.

Lincoln Center's Great Performers

Initiated in 1965, Lincoln Center's Great Performers series offers classical and contemporary music performances from the world's outstanding symphony orchestras, vocalists, chamber ensembles, and recitalists. One of the most significant music presentation series in the world, Great Performers runs from October through June with offerings in Lincoln Center's David Geffen Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Walter Reade Theater, and other performance spaces around New York City. From symphonic masterworks, lieder recitals, and Sunday morning coffee concerts to films and groundbreaking productions specially commissioned by Lincoln Center, Great Performers offers a rich spectrum of programming throughout the season.

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc.

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (LCPA) serves three primary roles: presenter of artistic programming, national leader in arts and education and community relations, and manager of the Lincoln Center campus. A presenter of more than 3,000 free and ticketed events, performances, tours, and educational activities annually, LCPA offers 15 programs, series, and festivals including American Songbook, Great Performers, Lincoln Center Out of Doors, Midsummer Night Swing, the Mostly Mozart Festival, and the White Light Festival, as well as the Emmy Award-winning *Live From Lincoln Center*, which airs nationally on PBS. As manager of the Lincoln Center campus, LCPA provides support and services for the Lincoln Center complex and the 11 resident organizations. In addition, LCPA led a \$1.2 billion campus renovation, completed in October 2012.

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