

Invesco Piano Concerts

Khatia Buniatishvili

Sunday, December 10, 2017 at 3:00pm

Pre-concert Talk at 2:00pm

This is the 784th concert in Koerner Hall

PROGRAM

Modest Mussorgsky: *Pictures at an Exhibition*

Promenade

The Gnome

Promenade

The Old Castle

Promenade

Tuileries (Children Quarrelling at Play)

Bylde

Promenade

Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks

Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle

Promenade

Limoges - the Market

Catacombs (Sepulchrum romanum)

Cum mortuis in lingua mortua

The Hut on Fowl's Legs (Baba Yaga)

The Great Gate at Kiev

INTERMISSION

Franz Liszt: *Réminiscences de Don Juan*, S. 418, R. 228

Franz Liszt: *Rhapsodie espagnole*, S. 254, R. 90

Franz Liszt: *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 in C sharp Minor*, S. 244, R. 106/2 (arr. Horowitz)

Modest Mussorgsky

Born in Karevo, Pskov district, Russia, March 9/21, 1839; died in St. Petersburg, Russia, March 16/28, 1881

Pictures at an Exhibition (1874)

As a piece of Russian realism, alive with vivid colours, varied textures, vibrant scenes, and telling everyday situations, Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* ranks with the best. Its original piano version is craggy and asymmetric and does not fall easily under the fingers. Yet Mussorgsky himself was a fine pianist and knew exactly what he was doing when he wrote the music. *Pictures* lies many steppes away from the bland salon miniatures and flashy showpieces that formed the diet of 19th century Russian pianists. In it, he uses a keen sense of dramatic realism to bring to life ten pictures by his recently deceased friend, the Russian artist and architect Victor Hartmann.

A memorial exhibition of 400 of Hartmann's drawings, watercolours, and set designs, mounted in Saint Petersburg, gave Mussorgsky an incentive to write his own memorial to a prematurely dead friend who had given him advice about his newly revised opera, *Boris Godunov*.

Mussorgsky was just 35 at the time he wrote the piece. He was born to an aristocratic land-owning family, but dispossessed of his wealth in 1861, when the Czar freed the Russian masses from serfdom. Forced to work the tedious nine-to-five shift of a civil servant and possessing an incomplete musical education, Mussorgsky had only his raw talent to fall back on. He wrote this personal tribute to his 39-year-old friend at white heat, in less than three weeks, saying he "could hardly manage to scribble it all down on paper" because the musical ideas were coming so fast. The pictorial strength of Mussorgsky's miniature tone poems far outweighs the provincialism of Hartmann's work. In the opening *Promenade*, the composer portrays himself wandering from picture to picture. As he goes deeper into the memorial exhibition, the *Promenade* melody gradually becomes integrated into the music of the pictures themselves, increasingly colouring the spectator's mood.

Franz Liszt

Born in Raiding/Doborján, Hungary, October 22, 1811; died in Bayreuth, Germany, July 31, 1886

***Réminiscences de Don Juan*, S. 418, R. 228 (1841)**

In a crowded field of 19th century piano transcribers, when it came to recreating art from art, Liszt simply had no equal. In all, he made 145 arrangements of other composers' music, from Schubert songs to Beethoven symphonies, including more than 50 transcriptions of operatic arias and scenes. He turned to Mozart just twice. A *Figaro Fantasy* was left incomplete. But with the stunningly virtuoso *Réminiscences de Don Juan* of 1841, Liszt produced a masterpiece. Showing a profound understanding of Mozart's achievement as a composer for the theatre, Liszt honed in on three of the main themes of da Ponte's drama: the Don's libertine attitude to life, his seducing of Zerlina, and the terrible justice brought about by the Commendatore. Each theme is presented as a drama in itself, rekindling the essence of the opera through Liszt's eyes. The statue of the murdered Commendatore commands the opening scene in the cemetery – both when Don Juan mocks his statue (Act II, Scene 3) and on his terrifying arrival at the Don's banquet later in the same Act. All the material, including Liszt's menacing, low, rumbling chromatic scales are drawn directly from Mozart's score. A brief transition leads to the duet "Là ci darem la mano" (Act I, Scene 3), in which the Don presses his attentions on the servant girl Zerlina. The duet is heard complete and then in two increasingly virtuoso variations, each of which includes a cadenza. A brilliant juxtaposition of the Don's seductive words and the Commendatore's terrifying voice interrupts them. The menacing scales again arise in the final section of Liszt's work, during the Don's exuberant 'Champagne' aria, "Fin ch'han dal vino" (Act I, Scene 3). His defiance is dramatically and uncompromisingly ended with the Commendatore's *tempestuoso* scales and condemnation.

***Rhapsodie espagnole*, S. 254, R. 90 (1858)**

A little over a decade before he wrote the Spanish Rhapsody, Liszt spent six months in the mid-1840s touring Spain and Portugal as a virtuoso pianist. He performed and published a Concert Fantasy on Spanish themes at the time. But, apart from sharing the *jota aragonesa* theme, the two works are separate entities, the later *Rhapsodie espagnole* being designed as 'reminiscences' of his time in Spain, composed in Rome in 1858. There were few precedents for Liszt's evocation of Spain; the inspiration that the Spanish nationalists Granados, Albéniz, and Falla were to draw from distinctive Spanish sources lay in the future, spurred somewhat by the Spanish-inspired creations of Debussy and Ravel. Russian composer Mikhail Glinka's *Capriccio brillante* of 1845 (also known as the First Spanish Overture), however, did feature in Liszt's performances with his Weimar court orchestra. Its main theme is the well-known *jota aragonesa*, which then was to become the second of the themes around which Liszt weaves free variations in the Spanish Rhapsody. The editor of the *urtext* edition of the Spanish Rhapsody has suggested that the Weimar performance on New Year's Day 1858 directly inspired Liszt to compose what he subsequently described as

'a reminiscence of my Spanish journey.' The *La folia* theme which is heard low in the piano after a florid opening cadenza, is a popular Baroque theme used by Corelli and many other composers as the basis for variations. (Rachmaninov also used the theme in his Corelli Variations). Together Liszt works the two themes into a glittering showpiece that was first championed by Hans von Bülow and soon became a favourite amongst Liszt pupils.

Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 in C sharp Minor, S. 244, R. 106/2 (arr. Horowitz) (1846-51)

Making a nostalgic return visit to his native Hungary in the winter of 1839-40, Liszt sought out what he considered to be the roots of his musical heritage, in the music of the Hungarian roma, the gypsies. His aim in writing the 19 Hungarian Rhapsodies was to reproduce the sounds of the gypsy bands, with their wild improvisatory *fioriture* of violin, cimbalom, and clarinet. The Hungarian roma, with their finely-honed ability to assimilate, had been quick to adapt the *verbunkos* dance to their own needs. They also took over a newer Hungarian dance developed in the 1840s as a kind of distinctive Hungarian salon music and known as the *czardas*. Liszt, however, heard it as music that belonged to the gypsies. To him, it was indigenous music, instinctive music without artifice. The origins of his Hungarian Rhapsodies often lie in an urban popular music rather than rural folk music and some of the composers of the various melodies can now be identified. Bartók had no problem with Liszt's historical inauthenticity. He called the Rhapsodies "the most perfect creations of their kind." The favourite Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 in C sharp Minor is dedicated to Liszt's Hungarian patriot, Count Lázsló Teleky. Vladimir Horowitz amplifies Liszt's already formidable technical fireworks in his mischievous arrangement.

- Program notes © 2017 Keith Horner

Khatia Buniatishvili

Piano

Born in Georgia, Khatia Buniatishvili discovered piano at the early age of three. She gave her first concert with Tbilisi Chamber Orchestra when she was six and was subsequently invited to tour internationally with them. Throughout her career, she has performed at venues around the world, such as Carnegie Hall (New York), Walt Disney Concert Hall (Los Angeles), Royal Festival Hall (London), Musikverein and Konzerthaus (Vienna), Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), Berlin Philharmonie, Paris Philharmonie, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées (Paris), La Scala (Milan), Teatro La Fenice (Venice), Palau de la Música Catalana (Barcelona), Victoria Hall (Geneva), Tonhalle (Zurich), Rudolfinum (Prague), Grand Theater (Shanghai), Beijing NCPA (Beijing), NCPA (Mumbai), Suntory Hall (Tokyo), and Esplanade Theatre (Singapore). She has participated in the Salzburg, Verbier, Gstaad Menuhin, La Roque d'Anthéron, and iTunes festivals, as well as LA's Hollywood Bowl, BBC Proms, Klavier-Festival Ruhr, and Progetto Martha Argerich.

Among Ms. Buniatishvili's musical partners are some of the world's leading conductors and orchestras. She has performed under the batons of Zubin Mehta, Plácido Domingo, Kent Nagano, Neeme Järvi, Paavo Järvi, Mikhail Pletnev, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Semyon Bychkov, Myung-Whun Chung, and Philippe Jordan, and collaborated with the Israel Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, Toronto Symphony, São Paulo State Symphony, China Philharmonic, NHK Symphony, London Symphony, BBC Symphony, Orchestre de Paris, Orchestre National de France, Filarmonica della Scala, Vienna Symphony, Rotterdam Philharmonic, and Munich Philharmonic.

Because humanity is at the center of all art, Ms. Buniatishvili's music serves as a portion of her activism. She has been involved in numerous social rights projects, such as the DLDwomen13 Conference (2013) in Munich; "To Russia with Love" (2013), a concert in Berlin to speak out against the violation of human rights in Russia; "Charity Concert in Kiev" (2015) for wounded persons in the Anti-Terrorist Operation Zone; and the United Nation's 70th Anniversary Humanitarian Concert (2015) in Geneva, which benefited Syrian refugees.

Her discography includes *Franz Liszt* (2011), *Chopin* (2012), *Motherland* (2014), and *Kaleidoscope* (2016) under the SONY Classical label, as well as *Kissine*, *Tchaikovsky: Piano Trios* with Gidon Kremer and Giedrė

Dirvanauskaitė (2011), and *Franck, Grieg, Dvořák: Violin Sonatas* (2014) with violinist Renaud Capuçon. She also collaborated with rock group Coldplay's latest album, *A Head Full of Dreams* .

She is two-time ECHO Klassik Award winner for *Franz Liszt* (2012) and for *Kaleidoscope* (2016).

Khatia Buniatishvili studied in Tbilisi with Tengiz Amiredjibi and in Vienna with Oleg Maisenberg.

Khatia Buniatishvili made her Royal Conservatory debut on April 6, 2014.