

The Masters Series Concerts (2011-12)

Sundays* at 3:00pm, at Studio Hollywood (*unless otherwise noted)

Programs, Notes & Seating charts for reservations available at: www.studio-hollywood.com

Alan Murray, piano

Program	Date
Chopin – The Piano Music	
the Etudes (& sel. Nocturnes & Mazurkas)	Oct 2 the Scherzos “ Oct 30
the Preludes “ “	Oct 9 the Sonatas “ Nov 6
the Polonaises “ “	Oct 16 the Impromptus “ Nov 19*
the Ballades “ “	Oct 23 the Waltzes “ Dec 3 *
Introduction & Rondo, Fantasy, Berceuse, Barcarolle, Andante Spianato & Grande Polonaise Dec 17 *	
Schumann – The Piano Music	
Fantasy, Arabeske, Carnaval	Nov 13
Kreisleriana, Toccata, Blumenstück, Symphonic Etudes	Nov 20
Faschingsschwank aus Wien (Carnival of Vienna), Kinderszenen (Scenes fr Childhood), Romances	Nov 27
Sonata #1 in F-sharp minor, Novellette #1, Davidsbündlertänze	Dec 4
Sonata #2 in G minor, Waldszenen, Papillons (“Butterflies”), Humoreske	Dec 11
Sonata #3 in F minor (“Concerto w/o Orchestra”), Fantasiestücke, Gesänge der Frühe, Novellette #2	Dec 18
The French & Spanish Masters	
Ravel – The Piano Music	
Gaspard de la Nuit, Jeux d’eau, Sonatine, Pavane, Valses Nobles et Sentimentales, ...	Jan 8
Le Tombeau de Couperin, Sérénade Grottesque, Menuet-Haydn, Menuet Antique, Miroirs, ...	Jan 15
Debussy – The Piano Music	
the Etudes, l’Isle joyeuse, Estampes, ...	Jan 22
the Preludes (Books I & II)	Feb 5
Images, Children’s Corner, Suite Bergamasque, Pour le Piano, Arabesques, Danse, Masques, ...	Feb 12
Granados – Goyescas , El Pelele	Albéniz – Iberia , Navarra Feb 19 & Mar 4
Beethoven – The 32 Sonatas & Diabelli Variations (1wk Series; M-F at 7:00pm; S/S at 3:00)	
(1) Sonatas #1-4 Mar 18 (5) Sonatas #22-26 (d) Mar 22	
(2) Sonatas #5-10 (a) Mar 19 (6) Sonatas #27-29 (e) Mar 23	
(3) Sonatas #11-15 (b) Mar 20 (7) Sonatas #30-32 Mar 24	
(4) Sonatas #16-21 (c) Mar 21 (8) Diabelli Variations Mar 25	
<i>a) Pathétique’ b) Moonlight’, Pastoral’ c) Tempest’, Waldstein’ d) Appassionata’, Les Adieux’ e) Hammerklavier’</i>	
J.S. Bach – The Keyboard Music (1-week Series, Apr 7-14; Mon-Fri at 7:00pm; Sat/Sun at 3:00pm)	
(1) Chromatic Fantasy/Ital. Concerto/Inventions Apr 7 (5) Engl & French Sts, Partita #4/WTC25-32 Apr 11	
(2) Engl & French Suites & Partita #1/WTC1-8 Apr 8 (6) Engl & French Sts & Partita #5/WTC33-40 Apr 12	
(3) Engl & French Suites & Partita #2/WTC9-16 Apr 9 (7) Engl & French Sts & Partita #6/WTC41-48 Apr 13	
(4) Engl & French Suites & Partita #3/WTC17-24 Apr 10 (8) The Goldberg Variations Apr 14	
Brahms, Schubert & Liszt – The Major Works	
Brahms – Handel Variations & Fugue, Paganini Variations / Schubert – Sonata in A minor (D845)	Apr 22
Brahms – Sonata No. 3 in F minor / Schubert – Sonata in G, «Wanderer» Fantasy	Apr 29
Schubert – The Late Piano Sonatas: in C minor, A major, B-flat major (Op. Posth.)	May 6
Liszt – Sonata in B minor, S. del Petrarca, Vallée d’Obermann, Mephisto Waltz, Au bord d’une source	May 13
The Transcendental Etudes, Après une lecture de Dante, Hungarian & Spanish Rhapsodies, ...	May 20
The Russian & Eastern European Masters – The Major Works	
Rachmaninoff – the Preludes	May 27
Rachmaninoff – the Etudes-Tableaux & Moments Musicaux / Balakirev – Islamey	Jun 3
Rachmaninoff – the Sonatas (No. 1 in D minor ; No. 2 in B-flat minor) / Szymanowski - Metopes	Jun 10
Prokofiev – Sonata No. 6 / Scriabin – Sonata No. 2 / Berg – Sonata / Janacek – Sonata 1X1905	Jun 17
Prokofiev – Sonata No. 7 / Scriabin – Sonata Nos 4&5 / Medtner – Sonata / Stravinsky – Petrouchka	Jun 30*
Prokofiev – Sonata No. 8 / Mussorgsky – Pictures at an Exhibition / Bartók – Out of Doors	Jun 24
American Masterpieces Jul 1 & 8	
Gershwin Rhapsody in Blue, Barber Sonata, ... - Jul 1 Works by Ives, Copland, Carter, Bolcom , others - Jul 8	

The Masters Series Concerts (2011/12)

at Studio Hollywood, Hastings-on-Hudson

Saturday, November 19, 2011 at 3:00pm

Frédéric Chopin – The Piano Music

Four Mazurkas, Op. 41

- No. 1 in C-sharp minor
- No. 2 in E minor
- No. 3 in B major
- No. 4 in A-flat major

Two Nocturnes, Op. 55

- No. 1 in F minor – *Andante*
- No. 2 in E-flat major – *Lento sostenuto*

Three Mazurkas, Op. 50

- No. 1 in G major
- No. 2 in A-flat major
- No. 3 in C-sharp minor

Intermission

The Impromptus

No. 1 in A-flat major, Op. 29

Allegro assai quasi presto

No. 2 in F-sharp major, Op. 36

Andantino

No. 3 in G-flat major, Op. 51

Tempo giusto

No. 4 in C-sharp minor (“Fantasie-Impromptu”), Op. 66

Allegro agitato – Largo – Tempo I

Alan Murray, piano

The Masters Series Concerts (2011-12)

The **Masters Series Concerts (2011-12)** comprise a series of approximately 50 mostly Sunday afternoon programs at *Studio Hollywood* (www.studio-hollywood.com), spanning the cycles of piano music of most of the great composers for the instrument, from Bach and the Classical and Romantic masters, to great composers of the 20th Century. The programs are intended to provide guests with 1-2 hours of quality weekly listening in a contemplative setting, surrounded by the natural beauty that is visible from the recital hall. The performances are intended to be informal but well-prepared offerings, as an interim step toward full concert preparation.

Chopin: The Nocturnes, Mazurkas & Impromptus

The Nocturnes – "Songs of the night", "piano bel canto": such is how Frederic Chopin's nocturnes are usually described. They are signature Chopin, and among his best known and most beautiful works. The genre of the piano nocturne was created by the Irish composer and pianist John Field (1782-1837), to whom Chopin referred. The nocturne, perfectly suited to the mood of the era, evokes with its very name romantic images of the night, the moon, and all the shades of lyrical and dramatic expression associated with them. Its poetry is shaped by an atmosphere of intimacy and reverie. Works for piano in this idiom were written by others, but it was Chopin, above all, who raised the nocturne to the pinnacle of poetry, becoming its most celebrated master. He composed and published his nocturnes over many years: the first date from 1830 and 1831, the last from 1846. Eighteen nocturnes were published by the composer in the following opuses: 9, 15, 27, 32, 37, 48, 55 and 62, bracketing the Etudes Op. 10 and the Polonaise-Fantaisie, Op. 61. An additional nocturne was published posthumously, opus 72).

Although they evolved in line with Chopin's style, the nocturnes possess a number of constant features. They are typified by a tuneful and ornamented melody, with a left-hand accompaniment based on flat or broken chords. This tunefulness and the rich and refined ornamentation point to the vocal character of the melodic line, bringing to mind the *bel canto* Italian operatic style (Chopin was a great admirer of Bellini). With regard to their form, most of the nocturnes can be compared to the operatic *da capo aria* with ornamented reprise: it is a tripartite reprise form, in which the outer sections are characterized by a lyricism and tunefulness, dwelling on a particular mood, whereas the middle section brings turbulent contrast, a dramaticism and animated 'action'. The opposition between tunefulness and agitation remains crucial, although there are works that adhere to a dreamy *cantabile* throughout. The ornamentation of the nocturnes evolved over successive opuses, gradually becoming an increasingly integral element of the melody and a source of rich coloration, and not only an exterior addition. The nocturne idiom also influenced other works, including some etudes, preludes, ballades, and sonatas.

The Mazurkas - Uniquely Polish dance miniatures, the mazurkas are the most numerous group of works by Chopin (51, 49 in thirteen opuses, and two published posthumously). Several others remained in manuscript form. Alongside the polonaises, they are the most 'Polish' of Chopin's works. There would be no mazurkas without Polish folk dances and music. With his mazurkas, Chopin forged an unparalleled model of the musical stylization of traditional, national, authentic folk repertory. Chopin composed mazurkas virtually throughout his life, from around 1825 (aged 15) to 1849. These miniatures came to form a weighty tome of the composer's most personal musical inspirations, a lyrical 'journal' of his life. It is perhaps in the mazurkas, more than in any other works, that Chopin allows the listener into his 'heart's sanctuary'. Pianistically uncomplicated, the mazurkas display an inexhaustible wealth of melodic invention and of harmonic, rhythmic and, above all, expressive nuances. They demand of the pianist "at the same time an almost naive freshness and a mature mastery", said Tomaszewski.

Drawing on the Polish traditions of the folk mazurka, but also of the popular and stylized mazurka, the composer made direct reference to three folk dances which he knew well from numerous visits to the Polish countryside: the *mazur*, *kujawiak* and *oberek*. All three are in triple time and have a characteristic rhythm. The *mazur*, lively and temperamental in character, in a brisk tempo, with a tendency towards irregular accents, forms the basis of many Chopin works. The *kujawiak* (from the region of Kujawy), is characterized by a slow tempo, with a tuneful melody. Finally, the *oberek* is a lively dance in a quick or very quick tempo, with a cheerful or even exuberant character. It is possible to find clear similarities between certain mazurkas and authentic Polish folk tunes, yet Chopin never quoted

from an authentic folk melody. To the contrary: in his mazurkas he creates a brilliant, sublimated synthesis of many elements of folk provenance, not infrequently combining in a single mazurka features from more than one dance. Indispensable to the interpretation of these works is *rubato* – the use of free accelerations and decelerations. Chopin usually published mazurkas in sets of three or four to a single opus. His early works in the genre still display clear hallmarks of typical piano miniatures (small dimensions, symmetry of sections), while the late mazurkas turn into expansive 'dance poems', in which Chopin employs exceptionally refined harmonic means—even polyphony.

The Impromptus – In Chopin's day, impromptus existed generally in the style of improvised variations, written on popular themes (e.g. from operas), as well as free-standing works created *in promptu*, (i.e. spontaneously, in an improvised way). Chopin's impromptus are moderately expansive works, somewhat longer than the nocturnes, but shorter than the ballades and scherzos. Chopin drew on the tradition – largely as defined by Schubert – of the impromptu as an autonomous work. His four impromptus are generally marked by cheerful expression (major keys dominate), devoid of dramatic features. They are of similar construction: a tripartite reprise form (ABA and coda), with the outer sections dominated by a sustained, heightened motion with a *meandering melody* stretched across very broad arches, while the middle section usually features a lyrical song in much slower motion. So it is the "reverse pattern" to the convention of the nocturne, to which the Chopin impromptu is in some way akin.

These works captivate with their airiness and poetic mood, their unparalleled subtlety and the "delicacy of the line" with which these "musical landscapes" are drawn. The essence of these unique compositions is not easy to grasp. The three opused impromptus are distinguished by the purest genius and a masterly refinement. Despite similarities in their overall conception, each one is different. The Impromptu in A-flat major, Op. 29 (1837) - a work "light as foam and bright in color" (Zielinski) - has a lacy delicate figuration in its outer sections and a tuneful melody, of nocturne-like expression, in the middle section. The most mysterious piece is the archly refined Impromptu in F-sharp major, Op. 36 (1839-40). Its form is more complex than that of the other three, its narrative somewhat capricious and surprising. It is a work that is strikingly distinctive. Firstly, it begins, not in lively motion, but contrarily with a quasi-nocturnal, slow-moving theme. Secondly, the middle section (in the key of D major) is marked by a wholly unexpected and gradually heightening heroic tone. Thirdly, the heroic episode breaks off quite suddenly, and by means of an extraordinary modulation - perhaps the "oddest" in the whole of Chopin - the composer returns to the main theme, subjected to variations. The Impromptu in G-flat major, Op. 51 (1842-43) is similar in form to the A-flat major, but is calmer than that earlier piece. This is music of great distinction and reflection. The Fantasie-Impromptu in C-sharp minor, Op. 66 (1833-34, but published posthumously in 1855), the earliest of all, wins over the listener with its very showy virtuosity, and its external pianistic luster is equally as important as the calm, lyrical song in the middle section. Only three of them were opused and intended for print by Chopin. Interestingly, it is the C-sharp minor impromptu, rejected by Chopin as unsuitable for publication and only published after his death by Julian Fontana under the title Fantasie-Impromptu, Op. 66, which has gained particular popularity among pianists and listeners. *Notes from The Fryderyk Chopin Institute by Artur Bielecki; edited by A Murray*

Alan Murray has appeared as a concerto soloist with orchestras in Westchester and in solo and chamber music recitals. He holds a degree in physics and languages from Cornell, where he also received a special University award for distinguished piano soloist. The **Masters Series Concerts** represent a continuation of the **Sunrise Music Series** programs, incepted in the Sept 2010–June 2011 season. In addition to this year's **Masters Series**, Alan continues the **Sunrise Series** programs Sundays at 8:30 am, with the 2011-12 series devoted to the cycle of keyboard music of J.S. Bach, which also appears in this year's **Masters Series** in April. The 2010-11 **Sunrise Series** was the subject of a Dec/2010 feature article in *The Rivertown's Enterprise*. His future plans include performances of the **Masters Series** at universities and other cultural centers here and abroad in the coming years. A specialist in the Financial Institutions capital markets group at Moody's, where he focuses on U.S., major Latin American and worldwide developing markets, Alan also provides music at the early Sunday morning services of the First Unitarian Society of Westchester, where he enjoys blending classical music with diverse world musical traditions. Alan resides in Hastings with his wife Amada and daughter Celia, where they also own and operate *Galápagos Books*, focused on world languages and literature, children's and general-interest books, local authors, and multi-media educational materials.