

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	
a) ‘Pathétique’ b) ‘Moonlight’, ‘Pastorale’ c) ‘Tempest’, ‘Waldstein’ d) ‘Appassionata’, ‘Les Adieux’ e) ‘Hammerklavier’	
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	

The Masters Series Concerts (2011/12)

at Studio Hollywood, Hastings-on-Hudson

Sunday, October 23, 2011 at 3:00pm

Frédéric Chopin – The Piano Music

Four Mazurkas, Op. 24

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

Two Nocturnes, Op. 32

- No. 1 in B major – *Andante sostenuto*
- No. 2 in A-flat – *Lento*

Intermission

The Ballades

No. 1 in G minor, Op. 23

Largo – Moderato – Presto con fuoco

No. 2 in F major, Op. 38

Andantino – Presto con fuoco – Agitato – Tempo I

No. 3 in A-flat major, Op. 47

Allegretto

No. 4 in F minor, Op. 52

Andante con moto

Alan Murray, piano

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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 Ballades

Chopin – whose etudes, preludes, polonaises, scherzos, nocturnes and sonatas are largely free of extra-musical references – was the first composer to introduce into instrumental music the term “ballade”, associated previously with vocal works of a narrative and epic-lyrical character. Although he told Schumann that he had been inspired by the poems of Adam Mickiewicz, Chopin was probably only acknowledging in the name “ballade” a certain poetic kinship or a generalized cultural affinity. A more compelling reason behind the choice of the title may lie in the pieces’ lyrical and narrative flow, which is of a purely musical nature and generates forms that are not governed by the normal principles of dramatic expression. Although there are two groups of themes and a number of development sections, these do not constitute a musical structure that can be described as sonata form. Time and again, Chopin avoids launching the “recapitulation” with the first theme and re-establishment of the initial key, orthodox procedures which might, however, have lowered the tension and compromised the music’s vigorous momentum and the emotional drama it has generated. With all their variety of expressive character, the Ballades also have in common the “narrative” gait of 6/8 meter (6/4 in No. 1).

Unfettered by formal conventions, their structures are nevertheless utterly convincing, and it is the richness that ensues from this extended narrative context that makes the Ballades arguably Chopin’s finest musical achievement.

In the First Ballade, in G minor, (completed in 1835 but begun possibly as early as 1831), a strong poetic-narrative atmosphere pervades the opening bars: the piece does not begin in the home key and soon reaches an enigmatic dissonance. When the first theme enters, it comes as a remarkably intense breath of epic lyricism, featuring a mysterious dialogue between an arpeggiated motif in the middle register and a sustained legato in the high register. A transitional episode and developmental passage bring about a growing excitement that subsides only with the arrival of the tender, magically lyrical second theme. A new transitional section follows the development of the first and second themes, and both themes take on a new character – passionate and intense. The tumultuous, fiery coda (presto con fuoco) brings this highly original, coherent and richly expressive work – the first in which Chopin’s grasp of larger forms manifests itself with such originality – to a close.

Although the Second Ballade, in F major, was completed in 1839, Chopin had been working on it since at least 1836. He dedicated it to Schumann, who had dedicated his *Kreisleriana* to Chopin in 1838. The first idea (Andantino) seems to emerge from a mysterious remoteness, almost as if from the distant past. Although apparently simple, it is prolonged with great subtlety until suddenly being shattered by the violently contrasting and stormy second theme (presto con fuoco). The abruptness of this dramatic break has led several commentators to identify as the work’s inspiration Mickiewicz’s poem *Switez*, which recounts the tale of maidens who drowned themselves in Switez Lake, Lithuania, in order to escape

from the violence of Russian invaders. A development of the first theme leads to moments of intense unrest and to a restatement of the second theme – a continuation of the unconventional development section rather than an actual recapitulation, which contains a reprise of the first theme in the low register. A sequence of trills lead to a simmering coda (Agitato), followed by a last statement of the opening theme, perhaps representing the “suffering of the epilogue”. But here again it would be advisable to interpret the theatricality of the Ballades’ dramatic progress in strictly musical terms.

Unlike the first two, the Third Ballade, in A-flat major, (composed in 1840-41) is not marked by distinct contrasts: there are clearly recognizable affinities with the material used for the two theme groups which, once again, are marked by a continuous fluctuation of expressive movements rather than adherence to conventional forms. What immediately strikes the listener in the first theme group is the captivating contrapuntal writing and shifting registers. Two bars of hesitation separate the first theme from the broad and varied second, elements of which prevail in the ensuing development. Particularly in the last third of the Ballade, an ethereal lightness gives way to feverish conflict. Within this impassioned atmosphere, once again, even the return of certain elements in a brief final synthesis does not serve to convey the impression of a conventional recapitulation.

The Fourth Ballade, in F minor, (composed in 1842) is generally considered the greatest of the four – a masterpiece of Chopin’s richest maturity – encompassing pathos, mystery, and the furious turbulence of an epic drama. Categorizing its structure is just as challenging: after seven bars of hesitant introduction, the wistful first theme (embellished by ornate arabesques) is soon subjected to variation and development, while the suave second theme is introduced, almost as an apparition, after nearly 80 bars, followed by new development and variation of the first subject (which returns, among other guises, as a three-part canon). In addition to Chopin’s interest in counterpoint, what is especially striking in the final Ballade is the prevalence of half-tone shadings, mysterious and suggestive. Yet the music again attains moments of deep expressiveness: the only return of the second theme culminates in an intensification, followed by a dramatic and tempestuous episode leading to a succession of ghostly chords. This moment of tender repose (or is it instead tense anticipation?) is broken by the raging coda’s reply of overwhelming, tragic violence.

Notes by Paolo Petazzi (trans: C M Perselli; DG 289 459 683-2)

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, inception in the Sept 2010–June 2011 season. In addition to this year’s **Masters Series**, Alan continues the **Sunrise Series** programs Sundays at 8:30am, 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.