

Sunrise Music Series (2010/11)

Alan Murray, piano

<u>Program</u>	<u>Date</u>
Chopin (200th Anniversary) – The Piano Music	
the Etudes	Sep 19
the Preludes	Sep 26
the Polonaises	Oct 3
the Ballades	Oct 10
the Scherzos	Oct 17
the Sonatas	Oct 24
the Nocturnes (I), Mazurkas (I) and Impromptus	Oct 31*
the Nocturnes (II), Mazurkas (II) and Waltzes	Nov 7*
Intro & Rondo, Fantasy, Berceuse, Barcarolle, Andante Spianato & Grande Polonaise	Nov 14
Schumann (200th Anniversary) – The Major Works	
Fantasy, Carnaval, Arabeske	Nov 21
Kreisleriana, Symphonic Etudes, Toccata	Nov 28
Sonata #1 in F-sharp minor, Davidsbündlertänze	Dec 5
Sonata #2 in G minor, Humoreske, Papillons (Butterflies)	Dec 12
Sonata #3 in F minor (Concerto without Orchestra), Fantasiestücke (Fantasy Pieces)	Dec 19
Faschingsschwank aus Wien (Carnival of Vienna), Kinderszenen (Scenes fr Childhood)	Jan 2
Gesänge der Frühe (Songs of Dawn), Blumenstück, Romances, Waldszenen, Novellettes	Jan 9
Ravel – The Piano Music	
Gaspard de la Nuit, Jeux d'eau, Pavane, Sonatine	Jan 16
Le Tombeau de Couperin, Valses Nobles et Sentimentales, Menuet	Jan 23
Miroirs, Sérénade Grotesque, Menuet Antique, Pavane, a la manière de Chabrier	Jan 30
Debussy – The Piano Music	
Etudes, l'Isle joyeuse	Feb 6
Preludes (Books I & II)	Feb 20*
Images, Children's Corner, Arabesques, Danse, Masques	Feb 27
Pour le Piano, Estampes, Suite Bergamasque, Nocturne, Rêverie, Ballade, ..	Mar 6
Albéniz – Iberia, Navarra Granados – Goyescas, El Pelele	Mar 13*/20
Beethoven: The 32 Piano Sonatas & Diabelli Variations (afternoons**, March - May)	
<i>In 8 Programs:</i> (1) Sonatas #1-4; (2) Sonatas #5-10 (incl "Pathétique"); (3) Sonatas #11-15 (incl "Moonlight" Pastorale"); (4) Sonatas #16-21 (incl "Tempest", "Waldstein"); (5) Sonatas #22-26 (incl "Appassionata", "Les Adieux"); (6) Sonatas #27-29 (incl "Hammerklavier"); (7) Sonatas #30-32; (8) Diabelli Variations	
Rachmaninoff – Preludes, Etudes-Tableaux, Moments Musicaux, Sonatas	Apr 3*/10*/17*
Scriabin (Son. #2/5), Mussorgsky (Pictures at an Exhibition), Balakirev (Islamey)	Apr 24*
Stravinsky (Petrouchka), Prokofiev (Son. #7), Berg (Sonata), Bartók (Out of Doors)	May 1
Brahms – Handel Variations, Paganini Variations, Sonata #3 in F minor	May 8*
Schubert – The Middle and Late Period Sonatas, "Wanderer" Fantasy	May 15/22*
Franz Liszt – Major Works	
Sonata in B minor, Sonetti del Petrarca, Au bord d'une source, Vallée d'Obermann	Jun 5
Dante Sonata, Legends, Hungarian Rhapsody, Spanish Rhapsody, Mephisto Waltz	Jun 12
Transcendental Etudes, Opera Paraphrase, Liebestraum, Consolation	Jun 19*

Programs & Notes (pdf) and calendar updates are available at: www.Studio-Hollywood.com

Program start time: 8:00am (*7:30am, ** afternoon series times and location tbd)

Sunrise Music Series (2010/11)

at the First Unitarian Society of Westchester

Sunday, January 16, 2011

Maurice Ravel – The Piano Music

Pavane pour une infante défunte

(in loving memory of little Matteo Jack Sabanegh)

Jeux d'Eau

Sonatine

Modéré

Mouvement de Menuet

Animé

Gaspard de la Nuit

Ondine

Le gibet

Scarbo

Alan Murray, piano

Sunrise Music Series (2010/11)

The *Sunrise Music Series* is a series of early morning musical offerings hosted by the First Unitarian Society of Westchester with the intention of providing members and visitors from the community with an hour of quality weekly listening in a contemplative setting, surrounded by the natural beauty visible from the Society's sanctuary room. The performances are intended to be informal but well-prepared offerings, as an interim step toward concert preparation.

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Ravel: Pavane, Jeux d'Eau, Sonatine, Gaspard de la Nuit

Maurice Ravel's piano works included in this program demonstrate the wide range of style and the total technical command of his piano writing. "I am not one of the great composers." he would write. "All the great have produced enormously. There is everything in their work -- the best and the worst, but there is always quantity. But I have written relatively very little... and at that, I did it with a great deal of difficulty. I did my work slowly, drop by drop. I have torn all of it out of me by pieces..." Stravinsky would call him the "Swiss watchmaker" of music composers. Fastidious almost to a fault, Ravel was nonetheless able to impart in his piano works an air of complete naturalness, even exuberance, that came from his inner mastery of the instrument and its potential.

Pavane pour une infante défunte: Between 1895 and 1899 Ravel wrote two pieces with a neo-classical inspiration, blending the archaic and the modern: *Menuet antique* (1895) and the *Pavane pour une infante défunte* (*Pavane for a deceased infant*; 1899), dedicated to the Princess de Polignac. Today, the *Pavane* is usually heard in the composer's orchestral transcription, but it was originally composed for the piano. The *Pavane*, as its name implies, is a stately dance, extremely poignant in its sensibility, and is marked by rather adventurous uses of dissonance and parallel harmonic progressions.

Jeux d'Eau: After the *Pavane*, Ravel's next composition for piano solo was *Jeux d'Eau* (*Fountains*; 1901), representing a stylistic reaction against the neo-classicism of the *Pavane*. The rather different style of piano writing found in this piece recalls certain works by Liszt such as *Au bord d'une source* (Alongside a Spring) and *Les Jeux d'Eau à la Villa d'Este* (The Fountains at Villa d'Este). In his autobiographical sketch, Ravel described *Jeux d'Eau* in the following words: "This piece is inspired by the sound of water, and the musical sounds produced by fountains, waterfalls and streams; it is based on two themes, in the manner of the first movement of a sonata, although it does not stick to the classical tonal scheme." In effect, what Ravel does here is to combine bitonality with the pentatonic scale. Water is represented by sensuous arpeggio "waves" of ninth and eleventh chords, as well as seconds, Ricardo Viñes, the pianist and premier performer of Ravel's piano works, recalled that Ravel favored 'pedaling the high notes to give a blurred impression of the air vibrating, rather than letting the notes sound clearly.' Ravel prefaced *Jeux d'Eau* with a quotation: "The River-God, laughing from the water that is tickling him." The piece is dedicated to Gabriel Fauré and crystallizes the essence of his inventiveness and magical qualities. *Jeux d'Eau* contains nearly all of the harmonic, tonal, textural, and technical devices that Ravel would ultimately incorporate into his works, a fact that casts doubt on the argument at the time as to whether Ravel was a Debussy-imitator, rather than a brilliant and original musical inventor.

Sonatine: Two years after *Jeux d'Eau*, Ravel returned to a rather more traditional form: the sonata, which seemed to have come to a dead end during the second half of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, Ravel managed to avoid the pitfalls and clichés of the form as taught at the *Schola Cantorum*. The *Sonatine* is a finely wrought piece, reminiscent of the most refined *objets d'art* of the 18th century. Ravel limits himself mainly to the middle octaves of the piano, and imbues the work with crystalline fluidity, and light coloring/texture.

Gaspard de la Nuit: Three years later, in 1905, Ravel began to compose his triptych on poems by Aloysius Bertrand, *Gaspard de la Nuit* (*Angel of the Night*). The subtitle to the work is 'Three poems for piano, two hands, after Aloysius Bertrand'. The music reflects the mystery of the texts by Bertrand, an early 19th-century Romantic poet, which stimulated Ravel to create his most imaginative and pianistically brilliant composition. The three poems, titled *Ondine*, *Le gîbet*, and *Scarbo*, appear in the musical score and are included in this program as an insert. The work resonates with dreams, magic and evil spells.

Bertrand's texts reveal an extreme fantastical style similar to that of E.T.A. Hoffmann (whose work greatly inspired Robert Schumann, among others), while Ravel (in his autobiographical sketch) describes *Gaspard* as "three poems of transcendental virtuosity". The shadow of Liszt seems to hover over the piano writing. Ravel set out to write a virtuosic piece "more demanding than Balakirev's famous *Islamey* or Liszt's *Twelve Transcendental Etudes*". However, the virtuosity to which he refers extends far beyond the technical difficulty of the work, to the immense range of sonorities required to impart to these three pieces magical effects of light and shade unparalleled in the piano literature.

Thus, the iridescent *Ondine*, the River-goddess represented by Ravel's melancholy melody, rising and falling like the "murmur of a sad voice singing", is a perfect representation of the opening lines of Bertrand's poem: "Listen! – Listen! – It is I, *Ondine*, brushing drops of water against the ringing diamonds of your window, lit by the dull moonlight; and here on her balcony is the lady of the chateau, in a dress of watered silk, contemplating the beautiful starry night and the beautiful sleeping lake." He surrounds her song with luscious, evocative arpeggios and iridescent harmonies, creating shimmering and seductive waves of sound.

After *Ondine* comes *Le gîbet*, built around an octave B-flat pedal-note that persists throughout the movement, and whose static quality conjures up 'the bell ringing at the city wall, below the horizon, and the hanged man's corpse glowing red in the sunset' of Bertrand's poem. As befits the subject of the gallows, the mood is cold and desolate – a marvelously sustained portrait of the macabre, with harmonies both intricate and indeterminate.

Concluding the set is the goblin *Scarbo*, represented by some of the most hallucinatory music in the piano repertoire. *Scarbo* fleets in and out of the textures, whose melodies are constantly interrupted by extremely rapid repeated note figures. Laughing in the shadows, reflected in the moonlight, he finally vanishes altogether. The emphasis is on rhythmic drive, diabolic virtuosity, and startling harmonies, making this work unique in the piano literature.

Notes: D.W.Eagle(*Pavane, Jeux d'Eau*); Denis Herlin/Alan Blyth (*Sonatine, Gaspard de la Nuit*)

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Alan Murray studied piano with Frances Wazeter, Allen Weiss and Robert Preston and has appeared as a concerto soloist with orchestra 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. A specialist in the Financial Institutions Group at Moody's Investors Service, Alan focuses on the U.S., Latin American and worldwide developing markets. Alan continues his musical interests in part by providing music at the early Sunday morning services of the First Unitarian Society of Westchester, where he enjoys blending diverse musical traditions from around the world.

Alan's near-term projects include programming a series of exhibits and musical events at his studio (www.Studio-Hollywood.com), beginning with the [Masters Series Concerts](#) for the September-June 2011/12 season, and others devoted to jazz, classical and diverse cultural music and dance programs, literary readings, and exhibits of paintings, sculpture and live arts.

Alan resides in Hastings with his wife Amada and daughter Celia, where they also own and operate [Galápagos Books](#) (www.GalapagosBooks.com), a bookstore devoted to world language, children's and general interest books and multimedia educational materials.