

WUSTL *MUSIC*

Friday, March 4, 2022 - 5:00 P.M.
Recital Hall, 560 Music Center



Melodey Soong

Senior Piano Recital

Program

Papillons, Op. 2 (1831)

Robert Schumann
(1810 - 1856)

Étude, Op. 25, No. 7 in C-Sharp Minor (1834)

Frédéric Chopin
(1810 - 1849)

Étude, Op. 10, No. 3 in E Major (1832)

Fantasia in C Minor, K. 475 (1785)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756 - 1791)

Program Notes

Schumann - *Papillons*, Op. 2

Robert Schumann (1810-1856) was a German pianist, musical critic, and composer from the Romantic era known for his piano compositions and his songs. He also had a penchant for character piano pieces that portrayed popular dances and different moods, typically grouped together as a suite of several pieces. This is reflected in Schumann's *Papillons* ("Butterflies"), a collection of twelve dance-inspired pieces. Schumann also had a deep love for literature and created musical interpretations based on literary works – in fact, the last two pieces of *Papillons* were directly inspired by the final chapter of German author Jean Paul's (1763-1835) novel *Flegeljahre* ("The Years of Adolescent Philandering"), where the story of two brothers ends in a masquerade ball with both yearning for the attention of one woman, even going as far as to switch masks to determine who she believes to be her true love. Schumann further described his process of completing *Papillons* to a close friend, stating "I often turned to the last page, for the end seemed like a fresh beginning, and almost unconsciously I found myself at the piano, and thus one Papillon after the other came into existence." He combined this masquerade ball with his love for Franz Schubert (1797-1828), who was a leading force in the popularity of waltzes, to create an amalgamation of dances including waltzes and polonaises (dignified ceremonial dances).

Composed in 1831 when Schumann was only twenty-one years old, the dances in *Papillons* fluctuate in a variety of ways, through dynamics, key, rhythm, and tempo that evolve throughout the overall series. *Papillons* opens with a rather thematic waltz that sets the tone of the piece, and as the music develops, more contrasting harmonies are discovered. While some light and playful airiness is present, there are also increasing levels of dissonance and distinct rhythmic sensations being introduced, creating a lingering tension that maintains until the resolution of the series. However, coherence is still maintained, with a traditional waltz rhythm consistently retaining its coherent structure. In the finale, Schumann draws heavily from his inspirations, beginning with melodic phrases drawn from the *Grossvateranz* (Grandfather's Dance), a traditional German dance tune from the seventeenth century that signifies the conclusion of a wedding. This perhaps was used primarily due to Paul's storyline, with the protagonists being hopeful about the possibility of marriage. Schumann also includes the main theme from the first movement to mark the end of *Papillons* along with a constant chime mimicking that of a striking clock, signaling the night of the ball coming to a close. The piece slowly wraps up with a very quiet broken arpeggiation, as if the magic is fading away, ending on a D Major chord that matches the key to the piece's opening and cohesively returns to the elements presented at the beginning of the collection. *Papillons* as a whole portrays this transition between childhood and adulthood, much like a butterfly growing into its wings - while there are brooding and passionate aspects that reflect the real world, there is still a consistent feeling of livelihood and youthfulness that remains.

Chopin - Étude Op. 25, No. 7 in C-Sharp Minor

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849) was a Polish composer and pianist from the Romantic era who wrote primarily for solo piano. He is known for balancing between technical and emotive piano composition style, with many of his works spanning the keyboard while emphasizing rubato to allow for expressive freedom. He has written compositions in a wide range of styles, including waltzes, nocturnes, scherzos, preludes, impromptus, and études. Chopin composed three sets of études, created with the intention to explore a technical or musical component. Chopin's second set of études, which has twelve works in total, was published in 1837, with Étude Op. 25, No. 7 in C-Sharp Minor being composed in 1834. This étude's technical factor emphasizes perfect phrasing and sound quality, with a heavy focus on the bass register, posing the challenge of achieving a proper balance between the melodic lyrical elements and other musical factors.

This particular étude is known for its slower *Lento* tempo and cello-like bassline, with sonorous aspects highlighted throughout the piece, and uses thematic elements from Vincenzo Bellini's (1801-1835) Italian opera *Norma* as well as Baroque-esque components such as a fugue-like interaction between melodies from both hands. The theme is stated four times throughout the piece, but there are moments where the melodic elements are ambiguous, with modulatory sections and accompanying melodic lines and improvisatory musical runs. The combination of these Baroque elements allows for the technicality of countermelody and a three-part structure to be retained while still having the cello-like storyline, enabling that emotive aspect typically found in étude performance to be expressed. While this étude may not have the higher levels of technicality showcased in some of Chopin's other étude compositions, it leaves room for more artistic interpretation and musical expression.

Chopin - Étude Op. 10, No. 3 in E Major

Composed by Chopin in 1832 and published as the third piece of his first étude collection, Étude Op. 10, No. 3 in E Major is known for being one of his most popular études and was nicknamed "Tristesse" by critics for its somber yet soulful *cantabile* melodic line. This piece's technical motive is to play the melody and the accompaniment using one hand while the other hand adds syncopated elements and more harmonies. Written in a ternary musical form, this étude relies heavily on its singing melody along with additional polyphonic textures saturated throughout the piece.

The étude begins with a lyrical section, creating a rather relaxing sensation as the top melodic line is accompanied by sixteenth-note harmonies and a juxtaposing off-beat bassline. This is soon interrupted by a more animated and passionate middle section that ultimately increases in intensity as it is based on rhythmic shifts and technical progressions with a heavy focus on double sixths. There are eight-bar motifs that start with a livelier texture but soon become more increasingly dissonant, reaching a virtuosic climax featuring double sixths with oscillating contrary movement from both the right and left hands. Soon, this transitions back to the original slower pace, returning to the polyphonic structure established at the beginning of the piece, with the final section being a shortened version of the first section. Overall, Étude Op. 10, No. 3 in E Major has the balance of technicality and musicality typically contained in an étude, with

its sonorous melodic line that unfolds in a rather dramatic climax but eventually cycles back and returns.

Mozart - Fantasia in C Minor, K. 475

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) was one of the most influential and popular Austrian composers from the Classical period. He was known for his works in almost all musical genres from his day, including symphonies, concertos, operas, and piano sonatas. In 1781, Mozart moved from Salzburg to Vienna, serving as a virtuoso pianist, freelance composer, and teacher. He quickly picked up the art of improvisation, acquiring a reputation as a rather successful improviser, and soon composed fantasias, which are musical compositions that are rooted in improvisation. This led to the solo piano piece Fantasia in C Minor being published in 1785 alongside Sonata in C Minor, K. 457 – it was the only Mozart piano sonata ever published along with a work from a different genre. While the fantasy tended to be considered an elaborate slow introduction to the sonata, Mozart typically performed the Fantasia on its own.

This work, which consists of six contrasting sections, alternates between more expressive dissonant moments and more stable sections with a harmonically serene melody and accompaniment. It begins with a rather daunting and somewhat chromatic main theme, almost mimicking the start of a sonata and heavily emphasizing the C minor key, but is quickly followed by an extended and tense transition into a second subject in a more cheerful D Major section. However, this transition to a major key is short-lived, as the piece suddenly shifts to a more dramatic development, beginning with a jarring set of two alternating octaves that intensifies with clashing tremolos and many significant modulations, further highlighted by Mozart's cadenza-like components. The high emotional intensity is rather remarkable, as it was unusual for this type of music to express such fervor at the time. This eventually leads to a more tranquil segment, almost serving as a recapitulation for that second subject yet still having some lingering feelings of anxiety, followed by a more substantial transition as the overwhelming heaviness of the piece finds a sort of resolution. Despite the range of harmonic transitions and emotions throughout the piece, it resolves back to the C minor key, encapsulating the experience and returning to that same feeling of uncertainty established at the beginning. Fantasia in C Minor undergoes a rather tumultuous adventure through its constant yet unexpected harmonic changes, and its improvisatory aspect shines through the range of emotions.

Biography



Melodey Soong began her music studies at the age of four and will be graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy-Neuroscience-Psychology and Music. Throughout her time at Washington University in St. Louis, she has studied piano under the tutelage of Professor Amanda Kirkpatrick. Soong has won music competitions such as being a three-time winner of the American Protégé International Piano and Strings Competition and 2019 Artist of the Year for the Great Composers International Competition Series, and has performed in venues such as the Isaac Stern Auditorium Perelman Stage at Carnegie Hall and Sala dei Notari in Perugia, Italy. She has also held a fundraiser for the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research through a benefit concert with

her brother, and has volunteered in hospitals and senior homes playing the piano as a form of music therapy. She is a recipient of the George E. Mylonas Scholarship for the Humanities under the Honorary Scholars Program in Arts & Sciences. Besides her love of music, Soong enjoys researching in her psychology labs and is hoping to pursue a PhD in clinical psychology in the future.

Thank You

I would like to thank Professor Amanda Kirkpatrick for her mentorship with my musical training throughout my four years at Washington University in St. Louis. Her guidance has allowed me to grow as a pianist, and I am incredibly grateful for the opportunities she has provided and the time she has invested in me. I would also like to thank the Department of Music for their support. Lastly, I would like to thank my family for their endless support and love - without them, I would not have discovered my love for the piano.

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