



# ARTISTS' NOTES

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS FROM THE ARTISTS

## From **ANGIE ZHANG**

*Our individual stories and collective narrative are what makes us human. We live in a time in which original voices are still struggling to be heard and acknowledged, so I chose three musical pieces that amplify voices across generations, cultures, and time periods. In these pieces, the performer has a say in many choices, musically or even note-wise. In other words, the artist is also a part of the creation itself, with an equally important voice that affects the outcome of the effort. As someone who is both a modern pianist and fortepianist, I am deeply committed to sharing the music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven on the instrument their pieces were written for. The sound of the fortepiano is what Mozart heard when he composed his masterworks. It is the instrument he played on for concerts. It is the original voice of all the familiar Mozart tunes we can whistle and hum. Hearing and playing the Mozart on the fortepiano, and then hearing and playing the Shaw and Glass pieces on the modern piano allows the original voice to be heard in its most pure form. This concert is of special importance to me, as an Asian American who grew up in Portland, OR, and as someone who considers the Olympia Symphony to be my orchestra away from home.*

## From **MIYA HIGASHIYAMA**

*I chose these sets of music because I feel they represent a sense of in-between that oftentimes marginalized people feel or when a community of voice is not being truly heard. When we are not listening, or don't feel like we are being heard, it feels at times like we are lost in a cloud of our own thoughts, turmoil, and wishing of what ourselves and the world could be. While these pieces do not directly address AAPI issues, I feel they strongly evoke this sense of whimsical, grieving, dream like, immersive journey we face as humans in times of fear, oppression, and violence, whether we are the ones being oppressed, or allies trying to help. I am deeply honored and thrilled to present this music to you all today.*



## **Fantasia in C minor, K. 475**

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)**

*Performed by Angie Zhang, fortepiano*

Mozart's Fantasia in C minor, K. 475 gives us deep insight into Mozart as a gifted improviser and musical dramatist. Written in 1785, one year after Mozart became a Mason, this piece traverses through an array of emotional dimensions, ultimately telling a story of who we are. Audience members can listen for the six sections of contrasting character, and figure out which ones sound more like improvisations, and which ones would fit in a sonata movement. The modulations are hauntingly beautiful, as well as shocking, as if to mirror the surprising places life can take us. The operatic moments juxtapose with the famous section with tremolos, which feels new and original every time, no matter how familiar one is with this piece. That is the magic of Mozart, and I hope that hearing this piece on the fortepiano will allow you to experience this composition in a new light.

*Performed on an Anton Walter Viennese fortepiano, c. 1805, built by Paul McNulty in 2016 (Czech Republic).*

## **Sechs Gesänge, Op. 13 No. 1**

**Alexander Zemlinsky (1871-1942)**

*Performed by Miya Higashiyama, mezzo-soprano*

Sechs Gesänge, Op. 13 is based on poems by Maurice Maeterlinck that were composed as piano songs in 1910 and 1913 and orchestrated in 1924. The mezzo-soprano vocal part is characterized by sensitivity and simplicity, embedded in a web of sensuous instrumental voices. Vienna-born Alexander Zemlinsky (October 14, 1871 – March 15, 1942) was one of the most powerful musical voices of his time, who had connections with both the more traditional and the Second Viennese School. Lieder had been Zemlinsky's passion since youth: growing up in Vienna, he was surrounded by the songs of Schubert, Schumann, Brahms and Wolf and in the summer of 1910, Zemlinsky decided to return to song. The songs depict three sisters with golden crowns who are searching for death, blindfolded girls searching for their destiny and other female characters in the cycle that conjure up paintings by Gustav Klimt. The poetry is typical of Maeterlinck's style: sensuous, mysterious and evocative. Zemlinsky's score captures this atmosphere by using wandering chromaticisms and non-functional harmonies that reflect the unpredictability of the verse, heavily influenced by Gustav Mahler.

## **Gustave Le Gray with Chopin Mazurka in A minor, Op. 17, No. 4**

**Caroline Shaw (b. 1982)**

*Performed by Angie Zhang, piano*

Caroline Shaw's Gustave Le Gray is titled after a French painter, draughtsman, sculptor, printmaker, and photographer, most famous for developing a number of photographic techniques. Like Mozart, he was an experimenter and innovator who continues to move people to this day. Shaw's other inspiration for this piece comes from Chopin's Mazurka in A minor, Op. 17, No. 4. What is unique about this piece is Shaw's ability to weave together voices from different disciplines into a creation of musical art. You will hear Chopin's mazurka in its entirety, which is sandwiched between her own written-out improvisations inspired by motifs and intervallic clusters from the mazurka. She also gives the performer ample opportunities to improvise as well. In this piece, she gives very clear directions about when a performer can choose how many notes to play, and which notes to play. With this conscious decision, she allows the pianist to have an original voice in the composition as well, and makes sure that every performance of this piece is a new creation. I believe that this piece has a very wide scope that can be heard in the way Shaw uses the registers of the piano and paces the piece. Gustave Le Gray's own photographs of the sky and the sea are wonderful depictions of both the mood as well as the scope.

*Performed on the "Bosendorfer Brussels Grand Piano," made in 1958 for the Brussels World Expo.*

## **"Am I In Your Light?" from Dr. Atomic**

**John Adams (b. 1947)**

*Performed by Miya Higashiyama, mezzo-soprano*

**Dr. Atomic**, written by American composer John Adams, premiered in 2005 and focuses on the great stress and anxiety experienced by those at Los Alamos while the test of the first atomic bomb (the "Trinity" test) was being prepared. "Am I In Your Light?", sung by Kitty Oppenheimer, Dr. Oppenheimer's wife, laments her husband's total absorption in his work as she unsuccessfully attempts to distract him from his reading. The words are taken from Muriel Rukeyser's poem, "Three Sides of a Coin." The music evokes a whimsical, dream like state with hints of sorrow and foreboding doom of what is to come later in the opera.

## **Piano Etude No. 6**

**Philip Glass (b. 1937)**

*Performed by Angie Zhang, piano*

Glass wrote 20 etudes for the piano from 1992-2012, with the first ten being more technically challenging. In his own words, they "were composed with the idea of providing performable music that would also improve my piano playing." Etude No. 6 was commissioned by the Sydney Festival in 1996 and has features such as large leaps and repeated notes. This calls for a piano with exquisite action and evenness across the registers in terms of depth of the key. The relentless powering-through from beginning to end gives the performer no break to catch his or her breath until the very end, when both performer and audience member question if the piece has really ended. In my view, the silence at the very end is just as important as any of the notes of this etude. The repetitive and even hypnotic nature of the piece allows the performer to color the piece in personal and original ways, and there really are an infinite number of ways to interpret this tour de force.

*Performed on a Yamaha CFX Concert Grand.*