

Doctoral Recital at Barnett Hall

April 27, 2024

1:30 p.m.

**Christine Ngai, Piano**

6 Pieces for Piano, P. 44, No. 3. Notturmo

Ottorino Respighi  
(1879-1936)

Sonata in F-Sharp minor, Op. 25, No. 5

Muzio Clementi  
(1752-1832)

- i. Piuttosto allegro con espressione
- ii. Lento e patetico
- iii. Presto

Piano Sonata No. 4 in C minor, Op. 29

Sergei Prokofiev  
(1891-1953)

- i. Allegro molto sostenuto
- ii. Andante assai
- iii. Allegro con brio, ma non leggiero

~intermission~

“Vallée d’Obermann” from *Années de Pelerinage (Suisse)*, S. 160, No. 6

Franz Liszt  
(1811-1886)

Notturmo, Op. 54, No. 4

Edvard Grieg  
(1843-1907)

*We gratefully acknowledge that we are gathered together for this performance on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) people.*



Nocturne in E major, Op. 62, No. 2

Frédéric Chopin  
(1810-1849)

This recital is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Doctorate of Musical Arts degree with a major in Piano Performance.

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## Program Notes

### Ottorino Respighi, Edvard Grieg, and Frédéric Chopin

#### 3 Nocturnes

Pianist and composer John Field, a student and employee of Muzio Clementi, composed eighteen nocturnes between 1812 and 1836. These pieces, which captured the essence and emotions of the night, left a significant mark on Chopin, who played a pivotal role in popularizing the genre for the piano. The three nocturnes in this program demonstrate the varied approaches composers took to interpret the night, from serene beauty to mysterious enchantment and emotional resignation.

**Respighi's Notturmo**, the third piece from his *Sei Pezzi* (1903-1905), uses impressionist textures to convey the serenity and beauty of the night. Grieg, drawing inspiration from a summer hiking trip in the Norwegian mountains in 1891, composed his *Lyric Pieces Op. 54*. **Grieg's Notturmo**, the fourth piece from this collection, captures the magic and enigma of the night through its polyrhythms and unsettled harmonies. **Nocturne in E Major, Op. 62, No. 2** (1846), is Chopin's eighteenth nocturne and the last of his twenty-one nocturnes to be published during his lifetime. The first theme undergoes an *unendliche Melodie* treatment, minimizing exact repetition in favor of subtle variations. Its middle section, marked *Agitato*, introduces counterpoint and tension-release motifs emblematic of his later compositional style. Influence from the *bel canto* tradition is evident throughout and further conveys the feeling of resignation.

#### Muzio Clementi

#### Sonata in F-Sharp minor, Op. 25, No. 5

During the eighteenth century, the key of f-sharp minor was commonly associated with themes of gloom, abandonment, and melancholy. Composed in London between 1813 and 1814, Clementi's Sonata in F-Sharp minor demonstrates his cosmopolitan approach. Alluding to Scarlatti's style, the first and last movements of the sonata incorporate running figurations and repeated cadence patterns reminiscent of Italian keyboard music. The emotive depth of the second movement and the stormy energy of the third movement resonate with the stylistic traits found in late eighteenth-century symphonies from Vienna and the Habsburg territories. The use of double 3rds in the final movement is typical of Clementi's early style, to the extent that on January 12, 1782, Mozart wrote to his father, "Clementi plays well, especially in executing passages with the right hand. His greatest strength lies in his passages in 3rds."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Plantinga, Leon. "Clementi, Muzio [Clementi, Mutius Philippus Vincentius Franciscus Xaverius]," *Grove Music Online*, 2019, accessed 22 Apr, 2024, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/display/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000040033#omo-9781561592630-e-0000040033-di v1-0000040033.1>.

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## Sergei Prokofiev

### Piano Sonata No. 4 in C minor, Op. 29

Prokofiev's Fourth Sonata was composed in 1917 and was the last sonata Prokofiev wrote before leaving Russia. Dedicated to his close friend Maximilian Schmidthof, who took his own life in 1913, this sonata delves into themes of darkness. The melodic and harmonic language of the first movement, as well as use of the piano's registers conjure elements of "dark, spooky" musical Russian fairytales.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, through strong rhythmic emphases and hemiolas, Prokofiev demonstrates his approach to the neo-Baroque style. The second movement starts off gloomy with thirds in the low register accompanying the main theme, unfolding through variations and ending in a stark manner. Reflective of his First Symphony, premiered in the same week, the third movement pays homage to the Classical style, notably through the use of Alberti bass accompaniment in the left hand. Emerging from the darkness of the first two movements, the character of the third is brilliant, encapsulating fun and sarcasm through the neo-Classic approach.

## Franz Liszt

### "Vallée d'Obermann" from *Années de Pèlerinage (Suisse)*, S. 160, No. 6

Liszt interweaves elements inspired by the beautiful Swiss outdoors and Romantic poetry within the piano cycle "Années de pèlerinage, première année, Suisse" (1848-1853). Among its nine pieces, "Vallée d'Obermann" stands as the pinnacle. Serving as a musical rendition of Étienne Pivert de Senancour's eponymous poem, this composition delineates both a physical and emotional journey. It commences with a meandering and oppressed motive, gradually unfolding towards a jubilant outburst by the piece's conclusion. Liszt's profound emotional resonance with this work is evidenced by his reaction, reportedly bursting into tears after hearing it performed by his student, August Göllerich, years after composition.

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<sup>2</sup> Berman, Boris, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas: A Guide for the Listener and the Performer*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008, <https://doi.org/10.12987/9780300145007>.

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