



**KRANNERT CENTER DEBUT ARTIST:
LISHAN XUE, PIANO**

Sunday, April 22, 2018, at 3pm
Foellinger Great Hall

PROGRAM

**KRANNERT CENTER DEBUT ARTIST:
LISHAN XUE, PIANO**

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Prelude and Fugue No. 4 in C-sharp Minor, BWV 873

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

Rondo in A Minor, K. 511

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Fantasien, Op. 116

- I. Capriccio in D Minor. Presto energico
- II. Intermezzo in A Minor. Andante
- III. Capriccio in G Minor. Allegro passionato
- IV. Intermezzo in E Major (Notturmo in autograph). Adagio
- V. Intermezzo in E Major. Andante con grazia ed intimissimo sentimento
- VI. Intermezzo in E Major. Andantino teneramente
- VII. Capriccio in D Minor. Allegro agitato

20-minute intermission

Six Études

Frédéric Chopin
(1810-1849)

Étude in A-flat Major, Op. 10, No. 10

Sergei Rachmaninoff
(1873-1943)

Études-Tableaux in E-flat Minor, Op. 39, No. 5

György Ligeti
(1923-2006)

Étude No. 10, Der Zauberlehrling

Frédéric Chopin
(1810-1849)

Étude in C Major, Op. 10, No. 1

Sergei Rachmaninoff
(1873-1943)

Études-Tableaux in E-flat Minor, Op.33, No.5

György Ligeti
(1923-2006)

Étude No. 6 Automne à Varsovie

Two Chinese Works

Transcribed by Peixun Chen
(1921-2006)

Autumn Moon over a Calm Lake

Transcribed by Jianzhong Wang
(1933-2016)

Five Yunnan Folk Songs

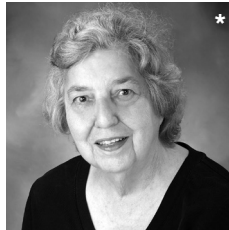
- I. Dali Girl
- II. Love Duet
- III. Guess a riddle
- IV. Mountain song
- V. Dragon Lantern Tune

Maurice Ravel
(1875-1937)

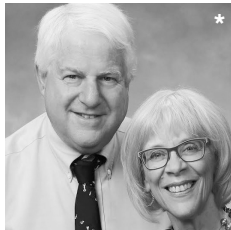
"Alborada del gracioso" from Miroirs

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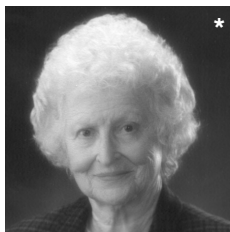
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PROGRAM NOTES

Within her program, Lishan Xue manages to sweep us through four centuries of music from the 18th-century Baroque period to 21st-century contemporary music. We experience the Baroque with Bach, the Classical period with Mozart, the Romantic period with Chopin and Brahms, and the modern period with Ravel and Ligeti. To all of this she adds two Chinese works arranged for piano by 21st-century composers Peixun Chen and Jianzhong Wang. What a grand journey it is!

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Born March 31, 1685, in Eisenach, Germany
Died July 28, 1750, in Leipzig, Germany
Prelude and Fugue No. 4 in C-sharp Minor,
BWV 873

In Bach, the whole is never a simple sum of the parts. His contrapuntal writing, for example, is more than a mere use of multiple voices at once, but rather a disciplining of those lines into profoundly expressive music that transcends style or technique. Bach is as inventive as Beethoven and as modern, in many ways as Ravel. Chopin, who represents the soul of Romanticism, looked to him as a model for his famous 24 Preludes. He stands alone in his transcendence of style and impact.

Bach completed the 24 preludes and fugues of Book I of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* by 1722 and by 1742 produced the same number in Book II from which we hear *No. 4 in C-sharp Minor*. While the books were circulated in manuscript form, printed copies did not appear until 1801, and the works were not published until 1866 even though they had caught the close attention of both Haydn and Mozart. The preludes and fugues in both books cover all 24 major and

minor keys, thus fulfilling Bach's stated intention to compose a work "for the profit and use of musical youth desirous of learning and especially for the pastime of those already skilled in this study." While that statement confirms Bach's noble intentions, it barely touches the depth and breadth of the works which are considered one of the most important contributions in the history of Western classical music. The reference to "those already skilled in this study" is a modest hint at the challenging virtuosic demands of the works. The two books might be similar in form, but Book II differs from the first in its expansion of style and complexity as evidenced in the *Prelude and Fugue No. 4 in C-sharp Minor, BWV 873*.

A simple but definitive rising arpeggio opens the Prelude, but of course nothing remains simple in Bach. The heartfelt Prelude is at once melodic and sad as it fully explores the key of C-sharp minor, as it also does in the following Fugue with all its complexities. Remarkably, the piece works as well on the modern piano as it does on the clavier of Bach's time, another indication of the transcendence of his music.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Born January 27, 1756, Getreidegasse, Salzburg,
Austria
Died December 5, 1791, Vienna, Austria
Rondo in A Minor, K. 511

While a Rondo can be briefly defined as a piece in which the leading theme is repeated consistently throughout, that hardly covers all concerning Mozart's *A Minor Rondo, K. 511*. It has even been suggested that the work, with its disquieting sadness, may have inspired Chopin's *A Minor Mazurka, Op. 17, No. 4*. While we associate

Chopin with 19th-century Romanticism, there is already a hint of the Romantic in Mozart's Rondo published in 1787. It is essentially a work laden with sadness, although that sadness seems to lessen as the Rondo progresses with its many virtuosic challenges and operatic qualities coupled with Mozart's usual demands for clarity. Of course Mozart's choice of a minor key for the Rondo also deeply affected the emotional impact of this beautiful work.

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Born May 7, 1833, in Hamburg, Germany
Died April 3, 1897, in Vienna, Austria
Seven Fantasies, Op. 116

While a *fantasy* is generally thought of as a piece free in form, Brahms' *Seven Fantasies, Op. 116* are assigned further definition by their titles of *capriccio* or *intermezzo*. Of the capriccios, there are three while the intermezzos number four. Within the set, Brahms favors the minor key except for the *No. 4 Intermezzo in E Major* and the *No. 6 Intermezzo in E Major*. While the individual Fantasies of the set are sometime referred to as "miniatures" because of their relative brevity, they should never be thought of as such in terms of their musical force. Together the set is also a reflection of Brahms' honoring of classical form within his Romantic expressiveness. Some listeners have even heard the set as a sonata when played in its entirety. Composed in 1892, the *Seven Fantasies, Op. 116* are associated with what has been referred to as the "autumn" of Brahms' life and work just five years short of his death in 1897. Certainly it is an autumnal quality that pervades the set.

Even the first Capriccio in D Minor with its persistent use of strong octaves for both hands is far from capricious as it builds in strength and alternates between the powerful and the lyrical. Even though the octaves continue in the Intermezzo in A Minor, lyricism rules in this beautiful work as does a repeated thematic statement before the solemn closing. Brilliance coupled with lyricism is the outstanding effect in the Capriccio in G Minor while the following Intermezzo in E Major offers a contrast in mood. The longest of the set, it bears a gentleness of spirit with a repeated motif that binds it together. The fifth Intermezzo in E Minor is almost playful with its dotted rhythms but gains a darker strength before a return to its opening mood. Cross-rhythms persist in it as they do in the following Intermezzo in E Major but stated differently in a chorale-like effect that turns to a complex lyricism. Brahms gives a brilliant and strong conclusion to the set with the final Capriccio in D Minor. He manages both to maintain the lyricism that pervades the set but gives a moment of strong staccato playing before the break-neck conclusion to his Op. 116 Fantasies. It is interesting to note that while all seven pieces are either a *capriccio* or an *intermezzo*, they differ in their manner of expression as Brahms lends them a sense of infinite variety as suggested in their tempo markings.

ÉTUDES

While the term étude can be defined as a “study” to improve the skill of the player, the études of Chopin, Rachmaninoff, and Ligeti that Lishan Xue treats on this program obviously go well beyond that academic notion. Within their virtuosic demands is an irreplaceable musicality.

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN

Born March 1, 1810, in Żelazowa Wola, Poland
Died October 17, 1849, in Paris, France

Études, Op. 10

No. 1 in C Major

No. 10 in A-flat Major

While we are all moved by the Romantic expression in Chopin’s work, we sometimes fail to understand his honoring of form. Perhaps it is this that encouraged Jonathan Bellman, scholar-in-residence for the Bard Music Festival 2017 treatment of Chopin, to write his daring essay entitled, “Don’t Love Him Because He’s Beautiful.” That is a difficult thing not to do, yet the two finely crafted études from Chopin’s Op. 10 remind us that there is more than simple beauty in his work. In addition to beauty, the work abounds in elegant craft and a high respect for earlier composers such as Beethoven and in particular, Johann Sebastian Bach.

Chopin wrote 27 études in two sets of 12 each, Op. 10 and Op. 25, plus an additional three without opus number. The Op. 10 Études were composed between 1829 and 1832, and published in 1833. Despite their being written when Chopin was hardly more than a teen, the pieces remain some of the most challenging in the piano repertoire. They became so popular that a number of them were assigned nicknames—although not by Chopin himself. *No. 1 in C Major*, “Waterfall” is a daring opening to the set with its rippling arpeggios over powerful

left-hand octaves. *No. 10 in A-flat Major* bears no nickname, but its tempo marking, *Vivace assai* (very animated), is an accurate description of the energetic and playful work.

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

Born April 1, 1873, in Starorussky Uyezd
Died March 28, 1943, in Beverly Hills, California
Études-Tableaux

Op. 39, No. 5 in E-flat Minor

Op. 33, No. 5 in E-flat Minor

America’s persistent love affair with Russian music belies the political disagreement that has beset the two nations. Even in the worst of times we never gave up our passion for Rachmaninoff, Prokofiev, Stravinsky, and Shostakovich, to say nothing of Tchaikovsky, Borodin, Glinka, Glazunov, Scriabin, and more recently, Alfred Schnittke. The reasons for our susceptibility are both complex and simple. Surely the Romantic or neo-Romantic spirit, as the case may be, which has infused Russian music since the 19th century is irresistible. That a common love of this music reflects other bonds between Americans and Russians is a complicated and interesting idea to ponder. It remains, however, that a *Nutcracker*, a *Rite of Spring*, a Shostakovich Fifth Symphony, and Rachmaninoff’s piano works have become irresistible fare on American concert stages.

When the troubled Rachmaninoff left war-torn Russia for good in 1917 and moved to America, it settled his financial problems but not the sense of displacement that plagued him, causing Stravinsky to say of him: “Rachmaninoff’s immortalizing totality was his scowl. He was a six-and-a-half-foot-tall scowl . . . an awesome man.” The melancholy that pervades his work could be seen as reflective of Rachmaninoff’s own sense of musical as well as geographical displacement. As the Second Viennese School was revolutionizing

musical thought, he said of his own writing: "I feel like a ghost wandering in a world grown alien. I cannot cast out the old way of writing, and I cannot acquire the new. I have made intense efforts to feel the musical manner of today, but it will not come to me." Despite these comments smacking of self-deprecation, Rachmaninoff has left us with an irreplaceable body of music that still attracts large numbers of listeners and players.

Rachmaninoff's Op. 39 is a set of 10 enormously challenging studies composed in 1916-17 after the Op. 33 set of 1911. Interestingly, the set of nine Op. 39 *Études-tableaux* was the final work Rachmaninoff composed before he left Russia for America in 1917. The *Étude No. 5 of Op. 39* contains everything we associate with Rachmaninoff: rich melody, emotional expression, and, of course, enormous virtuosic challenges in its rising tension, dramatic climax, and moving denouement.

Étude No. 5 of Op. 33 was composed in 1911 at Rachmaninoff's beloved estate in Tambov, Russia. Perhaps it is that location that inspired the cheerful attitude of the piece. Its gaiety, however, does not lessen its many virtuosic challenges which include octave leaps and chromatic scales.

GYÖRGY LIGETI

Born May 28, 1923, in Târnăveni, Romania

Died June 12, 2006, in Vienna, Austria

Études, Book I

No. 6, Automne à Varsovie

(Autumn at Warsaw)

Études, Book II

No. 10, Der Zauberlehrling

(The Sorcerer's Apprentice)

In January of 2006, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center presented a remarkable three-concert festival, "The Essence of Ligeti."

Ironically, Ligeti died the following June but not before an important part of the musical world gained even more respect for his musical genius. In his review of what he called "the exhilarating concert series," Anthony Tommasini referred to a quote from Ligeti in which the composer comments on his life: "I did not choose the tumults of my life. Rather they were imposed on me by two murderous dictatorships: first by Hitler and the Nazis and then by Stalin and the Soviet system." Indeed, the Hungarian-born Ligeti's life was fractured by these regimes. His education was interrupted in 1943 when, as a Jew, he was sent to a labor camp. His brother was deported to Mauthausen and his parents to Auschwitz. Only his mother survived. It is this part of his life that caused Alex Ross, in his brilliant book, *The Rest is Noise*, to group Ligeti with composers who produced "artwork that answers horror by rejecting it or transcending it." Despite the horrors of World War II and Stalinism, Ligeti "found it in him to write music of luminosity and wit," says Ross.

After the war, Ligeti returned to Budapest to take up studies with Pál Kadosa, Frence Farkas, Zoltán Kodály, and Sandor Veress. In December of 1956, two months after the Hungarian revolution, he fled to Vienna and later became an Austrian citizen. In Vienna, he came under the influence of such avant-garde composers as Karlheinz Stockhausen and Gottfried Michael Koenig who supported his interest in the textures of electronic music.

The *Études, Book I*, written in 1985, are widely recognized as gems in the long list of works by various composers written under the heading of "études" or "studies." The form fascinated Ligeti from this early set through Book II, which contained works from 1988 to 1994. He was working on Book III at the time of his death, with the first four études of that set published in 2005.

For models, Ligeti looked to what he called “the four great composers who thought pianistically: Scarlatti, Chopin, Schumann, and Debussy.” Ligeti also made reference to the 50 studies for player piano written between the late 1940s and early 1990s by American-born Mexican composer and cult figure Conlon Nancarrow.

From Book I, *Étude No. 6, Automne à Varsovie* (Autumn in Warsaw) demands the pianist to play in four different speeds at the same time over a regular pulse in a wide keyboard exploration. As the movement marking, *Presto cantabile, molto ritmico e flessibile*, indicates, the entrancing work is a fast and rhythmically flowing song that suggests a lament surely inspired by the trauma of Ligeti’s life yet transcendent of it. Although not programmatic in its effects, the piece seems to speak of a threatening world that often only music can define.

The title of *Étude No. 10, Der Zauberlehrling* (The Sorcerer’s Apprentice) from Book II is a reference to Goethe’s famous tale of 1797 which is used today to describe a situation (often political) where a person asks for help from someone he cannot control. The three movement markings of the work *prestissimo* (very quickly), *staccatissimo* (very separated), and *leggierissimo* (very lightly) are an accurate description of its challenging perpetual motion effects. The *Étude* is dedicated to French pianist Pierre-Laurent Aimard with whom Ligeti often consulted concerning the performance of his music.

MAURICE RAVEL

Born March 7, 1875, in Ciboure, France
Died December 28, 1937, in Paris, France
“Alborado del gracioso” from *Miroirs*

While the “exotic” qualities we associate with Ravel’s music stem mostly from his imaginative genius, surely they had to be influenced by travels to Spain beginning in 1905 and his family background—a mother of Basque-Spanish heritage and a Swiss father from the French Haute-Savoie. Not to be omitted from his list of influences would be the Spanish pianists Ricardo Viñes and Santiago Riera, foremost interpreters of his piano music.

“Alborado del gracioso” (Serenade of the Jester) is the fourth in Ravel’s set of five pieces from *Miroirs* (Reflections). Composed in 1904-05 and orchestrated in 1912, the set represents a daring development in Ravel’s style. In it he became thoroughly modern with his daring harmonies, exotic evocations, and freedom of form. Ravel himself commented, “The collection of piano pieces making up *Miroirs* marks a change in my harmonic development pronounced enough to have upset those musicians who until then had not had the least trouble in appreciating my style.” Sometimes better known in its orchestral version, “Alborado del gracioso” was dedicated to the music critic Michel Calvocoressi.

The work is in three sections, the first filled with pounding rhythms, artful repetition of notes, and dramatic flourishes of glissandi in parallel fourths—all in a certain spirit of jest. In the middle section, the jester turns romantic as Ravel creates a touching serenade. The third section is a return to the spirit of the first section but with a fresh take. The virtuosic challenges of the work suggest the great influence of piano virtuosos Viñes and Riera.

PEIXUN CHEN

Born December 7, 1921, in Hong Kong, China
Died February 25, 2006, in Shenzhen, China
Autumn Moon Over a Calm Lake

Autumn Moon Over a Calm Lake is an extraordinary landscape in Hangzhou, China. The legendary poets Jüyi Bai and Shi Su wrote poetry about this scenery. In this piano work, which was composed in 1975, Peixun Chen depicts the peaceful atmosphere surrounding a lake under a moonlit night. The piece consists of four parts: an exposition, transition, development, and recapitulation. This work implies the philosophy and aesthetics that ancient Chinese scholars uphold: keeping one's inner calm when individuals pursue their goals and beliefs, and maintaining persistence no matter what happens, especially keeping indifference to fame and fortune.

JIANZHONG WANG

Born 1933 in Shanghai, China
Died 2016 in Santa Fe, New Mexico
Five Yunnan Folk Songs

Jianzhong Wang is noted for fusing Chinese folk music and the Western classical tradition in his compositions, giving him notoriety in China as a composer, pianist, and pedagogue. His works in various genres have been frequently published in mainland China, among which his piano works occupy an unforgettable position. One of his most significant early works, *Five Yunnan Folk Songs*, was composed in 1958. In this suite, melodies are gathered from the different ethnic groups in Yunnan, China, with harmonies built upon Chinese pentatonic modes. Other compositional techniques, such as ornamentation and counterpoint, are applied to tell the stories about Yunnan's ethnic customs and culture. However, each movement tells its own story. Dali Girl is a portrait; Love Duet describes the scene in which a loving couple does not want to be separated; Guess a Riddle recalls the joyful game setting that is popular locally; Mountain Song expresses the voices of the nomad; and Dragon Lantern Tune draws jubilation after the harvest.

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PROFILE

LISHAN XUE

Praised by music journalist Philip Dewolf and Pascal Goffoux (*RTBF, Culture/Music*): “Excelled marvelously in the art of arranging the complexity of the sound . . . absorbing, captivating, and inventive.” Lishan Xue has performed in prestigious venues such as the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall in New York City; Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC; Benaroya Hall in Seattle; Fletcher Hall in Chautauqua, New York; Webster Hall and Taylor Grand Theater in Joplin, Missouri; Simon Bolivar Hall in Venezuela; the Shanghai Concert Hall; Beijing Concert Hall; Gross Saal in Prayner Musik and Drama Konservatorium in Vienna; and Konzert Saal in Haydn Konservatorium in Austria. She was also invited to perform in the Gilmore Keyboard Festival and masterclasses, Shanghai Spring Music Festival, Chautauqua International Music Festival, Beijing International Music Festival and Academy, and the Shanghai Conservatory Music Academy and Festival. Xue was twice invited to give solo performances of Bartok’s *Piano Concerto No. 2* with Sinfónica Juvenil, Teresa Carreño, in Venezuela in the 2012-13 season, and has been interviewed by China Xinhua News Network Corporation. José Antonio Abreu had applauded her as “. . . a great pianist,” while Justin Kolb said “a pianist is born on the stage.”

Xue has won numerous prizes from regional, national, and international competitions. Most notable are the Los Angeles Liszt International Piano Competition, New York Artists International Competition, Missouri Southern International Piano Competition, Chautauqua International Piano Competition, American Prize, Lorin Hollander Award in Piano, Matinee Musicale

Competition, Baldwin Piano Performance Competition, USA National Young Artists Competition, and the Gulangyu Junior and Senior China National Piano Competition.

Xue has received invitations and scholarships to participate in music festivals and masterclasses held in China, Europe, and the United States, where she worked under the instruction of Fou Ts’ong, Russel Sherman, Arie Vardi, Jerome Lowenthal, Nalita True, Solmon Mikowsky, HongKuan Chen, Robert McDonald, Jerome Rose, David Lively, Anton Kuerti, Tigran A. Alikjanov, and Guillermo Gonzales. As an active chamber and collaborative musician, Xue has worked with many internationally renowned artists including Atar Arad, Dale Clevenger, Peter Stumpf, Mimi Zweig, Kevork Mardirossian, Daniel Perantoni, Thomas Robertello, and Robert Walters. Xue has frequently been invited to work with other musicians as a collaborative pianist with groups such as the Indiana String Academy and the International Tuba and Euphonium Association. A life-long music educator, Xue has worked with students age five to 65 since 2003 in Shanghai, China. While studying at the Oberlin Conservatory and Indiana University, she taught secondary piano lessons to non-music major college students and local children. She is currently the instructor of the Piano Laboratory Program in the School of Music at the University of Illinois.

Born in Shanghai, China, Xue gave her solo debut at the age of six at the Shanghai Concert Hall. When she was 13, she recorded Carl Czerny’s *Left Hand Study, Op. 718*, which was published by Nanjing Audio & Video Music Publishing House. In 2008 she was interviewed by the piano journal

Little Pianist in Jiangzu, China. Recently, *Qingdao Evening News* and the *Qingdao TV Station* also specially interviewed her when she was invited to give recitals, lectures, and masterclasses in Qingdao, China, in 2015-17. In 2018 she was appointed as a judge for the piano festival of National Federation Music Club in Sioux City, Iowa, along with masterclasses and recitals in March. Her first book, *Jazz Improvisation for Everyone* will be published by Shanghai Music Publishing House in July.

Xue was awarded a Bachelor of Arts (2007) and Master of Arts (2011) at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, where she studied with Professors Minduo Li and Cheung-yu Mo. She pursued additional studies in Austria with Ralf Heiber and Sumi Cho. In 2013 Xue was awarded the Artist Diploma at the Oberlin Conservatory where she studied with Monique Duphil on the Dean's Talents Scholarships. Additionally, she studied fortepiano and clavichord with David Breitman. While pursuing her studies at the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University, she worked with Arnaldo Cohen and Menahem Pressler. There she received Artistic Excellence Awards, Joseph Battista Piano Fellowship, and other merit scholarships, and she received her second Artist Diploma in 2015. In 2016 Xue started pursuing her Doctor of Musical Arts with William Heiles in piano performance and literature at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as the recipient of the Charles Ross Fellowship and the Kate Neal Kinley Memorial Fellowship. In her spare time, she enjoys cooking by mixing several different styles of cuisine, and exploring other forms of art such as painting and film.