



WAVES!

WINTER CONCERTS 2024

Stephen Waarts violin
Jonathan Swensen cello
Juho Pohjonen piano
Sunday February 18 2024

From the Artistic Director

Dear Friends:

I suspect I may know how we pulled this off, but I am somehow still amazed that this concert has come together... Three musicians from different countries in Europe, who don't regularly tour as a trio, all with different managers, and yet here they are on the western side of the North American continent to play a few concerts together (this is their only Canadian date).

My dear friend and artist manager, Monica Felkel, asked me if I would be interested in presenting Juho, Stephen and Jonathan together in concert. I responded that I would be delighted – but I couldn't imagine how she would pull it off as she manages only one of the musicians, Joseph Swensen, and all three artists have such busy careers. Never underestimate Monica Felkel!

Theirs is a wonderfully designed concert of duos and trios by Shostakovich, Franck and Janáček. It's another reminder of why I love my job!

I would like to thank our Season Sponsor, the Peak Group of Companies, and the sponsors of today's concert, Robert and Denise. We simply couldn't present concerts like these without such support.

We are grateful to the City of Vancouver and the Government of British Columbia for their support as well.

I hope that you will love this concert as much as I am looking forward to it.

Sincerely

Leila



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The use of cellphones and recording devices is prohibited in the concert hall. Please take this opportunity to turn off all electronic devices.

音乐厅内禁止使用手机，禁止拍照，录音，录像。请观众关闭所有电子器材，感谢您的合作。

Program

Stephen Waarts, violin
Jonathan Swensen, cello
Juho Pohjonen, piano

Sunday, February 18, 2024 3:00 pm
Vancouver Playhouse

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)

Piano Trio No. 1 in C minor Op. 8

Andante - Molto più mosso - Andante - Allegro -
Più mosso - Adagio - Andante - Meno mosso -
Allegro - Prestissimo fantastico - Andante -
Poco più mosso - Coda: Allegro -
Allegro moderato - Allegro

(approx. 13 minutes)

LEOŠ JANÁČEK (1854-1928)

Pohádka (Fairy Tale) for cello and piano

- I. Con moto
- II. Con moto
- III. Allegro

(approx. 11 minutes)

LEOŠ JANÁČEK (1854-1928)

Sonata for Violin and Piano

Con moto
Ballada. Con moto
Allegretto
Adagio

(approx. 18 minutes)

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CÉSAR FRANCK (1822-1890)

Piano Trio No. 1 in F# minor Op. 1 No. 1

Andante con moto
Allegro molto
Allegro maestoso

(approx. 33 minutes)

Stephen Waarts violin

Early Life & Education: Stephen studied at the Kronberg Academy under Mihaela Martin and at the Curtis Institute, Philadelphia, with Aaron Rosand. He also worked with Itzhak Perlman at the Perlman Music Program and Li Lin and Alexander Barantschik in San Francisco. In 2013, aged just 17, Stephen won the Young Concert Artists International Auditions in New York. He was also a prize winner at the 2013 Montreal International Competition and won first prize at the 2014 Menuhin Competition.

This Season: In the 2023/24 season, Stephen will make his debut with Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra performing Beethoven's Violin Concerto under the baton of Robert Spano; Berner Symphonieorchester performing Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 5 with Dalia Stasevska; and Donnacha Dennehy's Violin Concerto with Killian Farrell and Meininger Hofkapelle. Further dates include concerts with Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana and Aziz Shokhakimov as part of Settimane Musicali di Ascona, and with the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra performing Khachaturian's Violin Concerto.



Photo credit: Emma Wernig

Recordings: Stephen's diverse recording releases include Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 1 with Camerata Schweiz under Howard Griffiths for Alpha Classics, and Hindemith's Kammermusik No. 4 as part of Ondine's Kammermusik cycle with Christoph Eschenbach, the Kronberg Academy Soloists and Schleswig-Holstein Festival Orchestra in 2020. Stephen released his acclaimed debut recital album for Rubicon Classics, featuring works by Schumann and Bartók, in November 2018 with pianist Gabriele Carcano.

Awards & Prizes: Stephen was awarded the International Classical Music Awards Orchestra Award by Lucerne Symphony Orchestra in 2019. In March 2017 he was awarded the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant. He also won Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern's soloist award the same year and has performed at the festival every year since. In 2015, he was awarded a scholarship from Mozart Gesellschaft Dortmund following his appearance at Krzyżowa-Music. In the same year, his prize-winning success at the 2015 Queen Elisabeth Competition – including securing the majority vote of the television audience – boosted international attention.

Stephen Waarts is represented by HarrisonParrott, London, UK.

Jonathan Swensen cello

Early Life & Education: A graduate of the Royal Danish Academy of Music, Jonathan continued his studies with Torleif Thedéen at the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo, and Laurence Lesser at the New England Conservatory, where he completed his Artist Diploma in May 2023.

Jonathan made his critically acclaimed recital debuts at the Kennedy Center's Terrace Theater and New York's Merkin Concert Hall under the auspices of Young Concert Artists in 2020 after winning first prize in the YCA International Auditions in 2018.

Performances: Recent performances included the returning to the Aarhus Symphony Orchestra under Hartmut Haenchen and the NFM Leopoldinum in a play-direct programme, as well as his debut with the Aalborg Symphony Orchestra under Douglas Boyd. He also performed the Dvořák Concerto with the Slovak State Philharmonic Košice both in Košice and at the Festival Allegretto Žilina. In the U.S., Jonathan performed Shostakovich's second concerto with the New England Conservatory Philharmonia and Hugh Wolff and the Lalo Concerto with Aiken Symphony in South Carolina, gave recitals at the Casals Festival and the Morgan Library and Museum and performed chamber music at San Francisco Conservatory of Music, ChamberFest West, and Camerata Pacifica.

Recordings: September 2022 saw the release of Jonathan's debut recording *Fantasia* on Champs Hill Records, an album of works for solo cello which received rave reviews on its release, including from Gramophone, BBC Music, and The Strad.

Awards & Prizes: Jonathan has captured First Prize at the 2019 Windsor International String Competition and the 2018 Khachaturian International Cello Competition and was a recipient of the Musikanmelderringens Artist Prize in 2020 and the Jacob Gades Scholarship in 2019 in Denmark. Jonathan will join the Bowers Program of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center in 2024.



Mr. Swensen is represented by
Monica Felkel Creative Partners, LLC for North American engagements.
www.monicafelkelcreativepartners.com

Juho Pohjonen piano

Early Life & Education: Juho earned a master's degree from Meri Louhos and Hui-Ying Liu-Tawaststjerna at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. He was selected by Sir András Schiff as the winner of the 2009 Klavier-Festival Ruhr Scholarship.

In 2019, Pohjonen launched MyPianist, an AI-based app that provides interactive piano accompaniment. (<https://mypianist.app>).

Performances: Juho recently performed Sauli Zinovjev's Piano Concerto with the Lahti Symphony and Daniél Bjarnason's concerto, "Processions", with the Helsinki Philharmonic, both with Bjarnason at the podium. Pohjonen has also collaborated with today's foremost conductors, including Marin Alsop, Lionel Bringuier, Marek Janowski, Fabien Gabel, Kirill Karabits, Osmo Vänskä, Pietari Inkinen, Stefan Asbury, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Robert Spano, Markus Stenz and Pinchas Zukerman.

Juho enjoys an ongoing relationship with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, with whom he has performed at Alice Tully Hall, the Saratoga Performing Arts Center and Wolf Trap. He has also played alongside the Escher and Calidore String Quartets and regularly collaborates in programs at the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg and with violinist Cho-Liang Lin. He has played at festivals in Lucerne, Finland, Norway and Germany; the Gilmore Keyboard Festival; the Marlboro Music Festival; and ChamberFest Cleveland.

Recordings: Juho's growing discography includes *The Dvořák Album*, recorded with Jan Vogler and the Moritzburg Festival (Sony Classical, 2022); *Works for Cello and Piano by Chopin, Grieg and Schumann* with cellist Inbal Segev (Avie Records, 2018); *Bach: 6 Sonatas for Violin and Piano* with violinist Nicolas Dautricourt (La Dolce Volta, 2018); *Music@Menlo Live: Maps and Legends* (2010); and *Plateaux*, an album of works by Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen recorded with Ed Spanjaard and the Danish National Symphony (Dacapo, 2009). Pohjonen is a founding member of the Sibelius Piano Trio.



Photo credit: J. Henry Fair

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New York, New York 10001
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Juho Pohjonen has recorded for Dacapo and Music@Menlo LIVE.

Program Notes

Dmitri Shostakovich

Piano Trio No. 1 in C minor Op. 8

Shostakovich's first piano trio is a youthful work, written in 1923 when the 16-year-old composer was convalescing from a bout of tuberculosis in a sanatorium in Crimea. This was a convalescence made sweeter by the pulse-quickenning presence nearby of 14-year-old Tatiana Glivenko, the local girl with whom he had fallen madly in love and to whom he dedicated this trio. This backstory, and the composer's initial title for the work – *Poème* – have caused many critics to label it one of Shostakovich's most 'romantic' compositions.

The trio was not published in the composer's lifetime, but was pieced together from various manuscripts and issued in 1980, with the missing last 22 bars of the piano part composed by Shostakovich's pupil, Boris Tishchenko.

The work is in a single movement, but with more than a dozen changes in tempo, from *Adagio* to *Prestissimo fantastico*. This might make it sound episodic but for its extreme motivic concentration and the large-scale sonata form used in its construction.

Another explanation advanced by some commentators for this extreme sectionalization is that the young Shostakovich was imitating the type of quickly changing episodic music he had been playing in his part-time job as a cinema pianist accompanying silent films. In fact, it is reported that he actually performed this trio with friends at a film screening before a real audience, although the critical reception it received from those present at this 'premiere' was not recorded for posterity.

It is remarkable to note, however, that the mature composer is distinctly perceivable in the younger composer's efforts, as Robert Phillips succinctly outlines in his insightful notes to a 2011 Hyperion recording of this trio:

Already, this student work contains recognizable Shostakovich hallmarks: lyrical melodies coloured by acerbic harmonies, sudden contrasts of pace and energy, insistent rhythms, and spare textures giving way to unashamedly romantic passages and powerful climaxes.

The work opens softly with a plaintive first theme, the dominant feature of which is its series of falling semitones, first intoned by the cello and then imitated by the violin:



This semitone motive is *everywhere* in the first section of this work. There are rising semitones, falling semitones, and even rising and falling semitones as in this cello variant of the theme:



This semitone motive even appears, in diminution, in some of the frantic piano chatter that animates the first section of the trio:



The second theme, by contrast, is diatonic to the core, singing out in a pure E flat major with nary a chromatic semitone anywhere within earshot. And to reinforce the point, this theme is accompanied by a chorus of smooth parallel triads, much in the manner of Ravel:



These two themes provide ample fodder for a development section that tries to turn this blissful major-mode melody into a minor-mode villain with the semitone motive constantly biting at its heels.

The recapitulation returns the contesting thematic units to their corners for a final review and in the coda offers tantalizing evidence that the proponents of Shostakovich's silent-movie soundtrack inspiration might be on to something in this thrilling, but more-than-a-bit melodramatic, tremolo figuration accompanying an apotheosis of the second theme:



Shmalzy as it is, it definitely contributes to the feeling in the work's final section that diatonic love has triumphed over chromatic anxiety.

Leoš Janáček

Pohádka (Fairy Tale) for cello and piano

Leoš Janáček is a one-off in music history. His is a voice of visionary ecstatic utterances, of mysterious murmurings evoking the folk music of his Moravian heritage, all tinged with the blurry soft hum of its favourite instrument, the *cimbalom*.

As American conductor Kenneth Woods puts it:

Janáček comes from nowhere and leads to no one. There is simply no music before or after Janáček that sounds like his. His music is infinitely easy to recognize and completely impossible to replicate.

Janáček was fascinated by the study of speech rhythms and his music, while often misty and atmospheric, is strongly imprinted with the rhythm of the human voice. Utterly indifferent to the compositional conventions of his time, he creates his textures out of short bursts of melody that shimmer with sudden changes of modal colouring. These build to powerful emotional climaxes by the repetition of ostinato fragments that rarely seem to start on the strong beats of the bar.

Janáček's *Fairy Tale (Pohádka)* for cello and piano dates from 1910 and after numerous revisions reached its final form in 1923. Like much of his instrumental music, this three-movement work is programmatic, loosely based on scenes from *The Tale of Tsar Berendyey* by the Russian poet Vasily Zhukovsky (1783-1852).

While the story is long and convoluted, the gist of it is that the handsome young Tsarevitch, Prince Ivan, has had his soul promised to the King of the Underworld, Kashchei, but on mature consideration decides that he would much rather run away with the grumpy King's fetching young daughter, Maria. This is a decision which leads to an adventure-filled chase over hill and dale until the two lovers finally reach safety and live happily ever after.

Just how Janáček's score relates to the events of the tale is not really clear, but many interpreters see the cello in the role of the young prince and the piano as Maria. Stephen Isserlis offers a very suggestive version of how the music illustrates the story, as follows.

The first movement, he says, opens with the dreamy setting of a magical lake where Ivan and Maria first meet.



The prince soon cheerfully chirps into the scene with his signature dotted-rhythm motif:



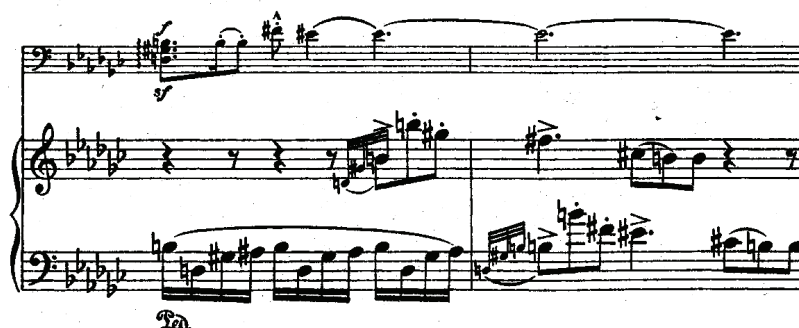
Enraptured by each other's company, they fall into a love duet, but then big bad Kashchei arrives, and they have to escape to the pounding of horses' hooves, represented by small ostinato fragments in the texture:



The second movement is full of magic. It opens with a hopping motive as the two lovers feel quite perky after their narrow escape.



But trouble is on the way. The harmony gradually turns dark and the texture more turbulent as Prince Ivan gets a spell put on him so he will fall in love with someone else. And in a fit of pique Maria turns into a blue flower, as any young girl would do under the circumstances. This prompts an achingly lyrical outpouring in the middle section. The juxtaposition of the Prince's motif and the perky hopping motive from the opening makes clear that the only question on young Maria's mind is *What has happened to my beloved Ivan?*



But fortunately, a magician who does house calls finally releases them from their spells and they return to the hoppy good spirits with which the movement began.

The last movement sees the couple rejoicing in their good fortune with an opening dance-like tune, trilling with excitement:



This soon blends into a more lyrical melody animated with an accompaniment texture pulsing with the type of short motivic snippets that Janáček loves to employ.

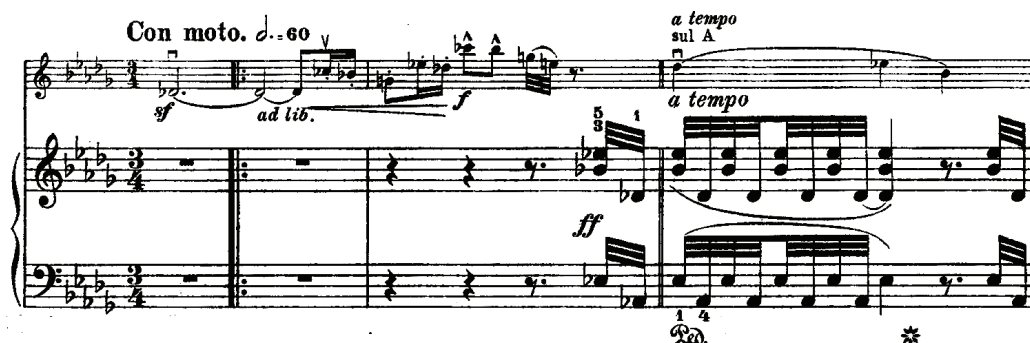


The movement ends quietly, in contemplation of a magical adventure successfully completed.

Leoš Janáček Sonata for Violin and Piano

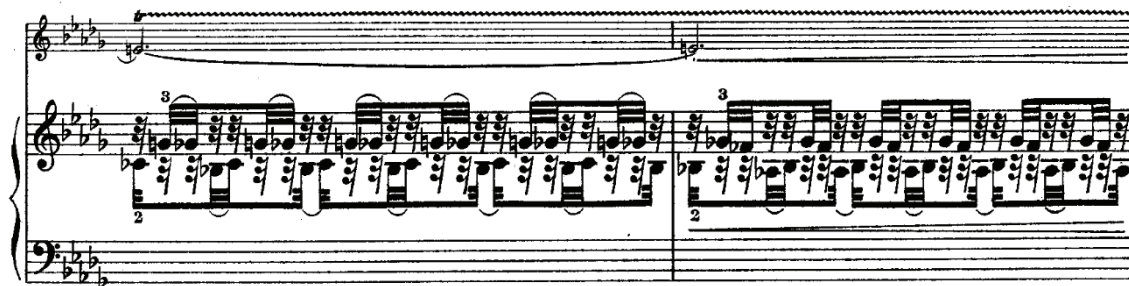
The music of Janáček has many wondrously strange qualities. Intimate and yet oddly exotic, it sits stylistically on the border between Eastern and Western Europe. One hears the thrum of the Moravian *cimbalom* (hammered dulcimer) but filtered through a misty veil of French impressionism. This is music of great terseness and concentration, its emotional intensity deriving from its use of short motifs, often repeated, and swift changes of tempo.

A frequent device is the three-note “hook motive” consisting of three notes connected by a short interval followed by a long interval. Just such a motive, intoned by the violin at the *a tempo* marking of the opening, provides the principal melodic material on which the first movement is based.



This three-note motive, whether presented in long lyrical quarter notes or in brief, aphoristic snippets of 32nds, is woven densely through the fabric of the movement in constantly varied form. And while the movement is written in a kind of monothematic sonata form with an exposition (repeated), a development section and a recapitulation, the difference between these sectional divisions is minimized because every part of this movement is a variation on the ubiquitous three-note “hook motive”.

The ‘exotic’ sound coming out of the piano results from the way that Janáček makes the instrument imitate the vibrating hum of the dulcimer with tremolos and other gestures idiomatic to that hammered instrument.



In passages like these it seems as though the composer has abandoned melody entirely to churn out blurry timbral effects in pure sound.

The same compositional process of continually varying a short repeated melodic motive is also used in the second movement, marked *con moto*, but to more lyrical ends. In this movement two theme threads of repeated motives are varied in turn. The first is announced at the outset:



The second uses a repeated-note motive and ends with a little 'Scotch snap' figure.



Harp-like piano arpeggios of the utmost delicacy give the central episode an admirable simplicity and charm.

The *Allegretto* third movement is structured in the A-B-A form of a traditional scherzo, with lively rambunctious music in the A section and a B section of a more sustained lyrical quality. Notable is how the piano still thinks it's a dulcimer, buzzing away at the opening with a sonority-building left-hand trill and a hammer-stroke fanfare-type melody while the violin imitates a glissando on the same instrument:

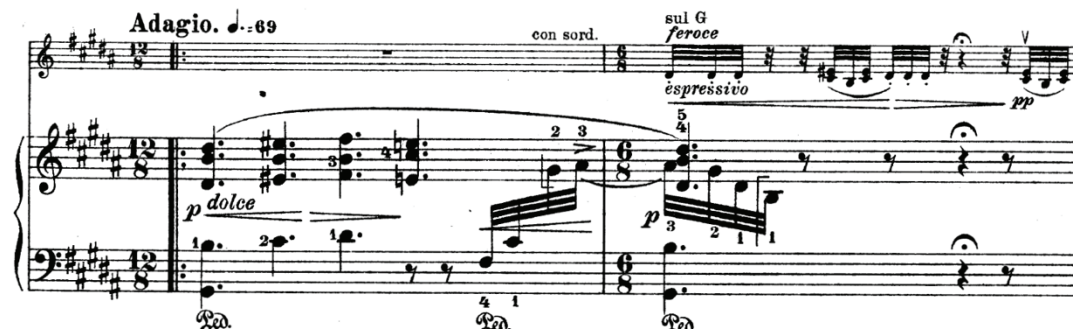


These atmospheric are soon relieved by scraps of mysterious but lyrical singable melody:



These two themes come and go like ghosts passing through an empty room and the movement ends with an emphatic ... question mark.

The sonata ends with an *Adagio* final movement based on the implications of yearning contained in the piano's opening 4-note phrase.



At first reluctant to join in the reverie, the violin lets the piano take the lead, but then gets drawn in to the lyrical up-draught and takes over the 4-note phrase as its own to make it soar over an outpouring of throbbing tremolos in the piano.

Its fever spent, the movement's emotional intensity drains away to an enigmatically quiet end.

César Franck

Piano Trio No. 1 in F# minor Op. 1 No. 1

César Franck's first published work, his Piano Trio in F# minor, was completed in 1841 when he was still a teenaged student at the Paris Conservatoire. As such it displays the raw, undeveloped talent of the young composer while also giving tantalizing hints of the compositional processes for which he would later be known.

On the 'tantalizing hints' side of the ledger one may confidently inscribe his early use of *cyclical form*, i.e., the use of identical or similar musical motives, and their variants, in all three movements of the work. He was yet to discover, however, the slip-slidey voice-leading of chromatic harmony on which his mature style was to eventually be based.

The 'raw, undeveloped' side of his talent, which might be characterized as a certain plodding earnestness in the presentation of musical ideas, is thumpingly evident from the work's opening measures. The first movement begins with a Spartan 8 bars of left-hand piano octaves, continuing, unabated, as the cello enters with a gravely paced, cantus-firmus-like theme.



With the eventual entry of the violin the roll-call of instrumental forces is complete, but each instrument seems to be wandering around in its own space, with its own melodic agenda.

This first section of this movement advances at the lava-pace of a passacaglia, mixing motivic snippets from the piano's trudging octaves with more lyrical exhalations from the strings. This steady march builds to a grand climax, followed by a G.P. (*gran pausa*) that sets up the entry of the second theme, a paean of praise to the notes of the F# major scale:



The first theme, with its characteristic deliberate pacing, forms the central concern of the development section, that builds up, in one great *fugato*, to yet another great climax, leading in turn to an abbreviated recapitulation and a bizarrely furtive pizzicato codetta aimed at jolting you out of your seat.



The young Franck's penchant for cyclical form comes fully into view in his second movement scherzo, which features two trios, the second of which is derived from the first movement's second theme. Like the first movement, it opens with the piano laying down an ostinato on which the strings plant their flag.



The first trio begins (and this is becoming a 'tic' in the scoring of this work) with the piano announcing the musical menu for the other instruments to follow:



The second trio renews our acquaintance with the major scale we were introduced to in the first movement:



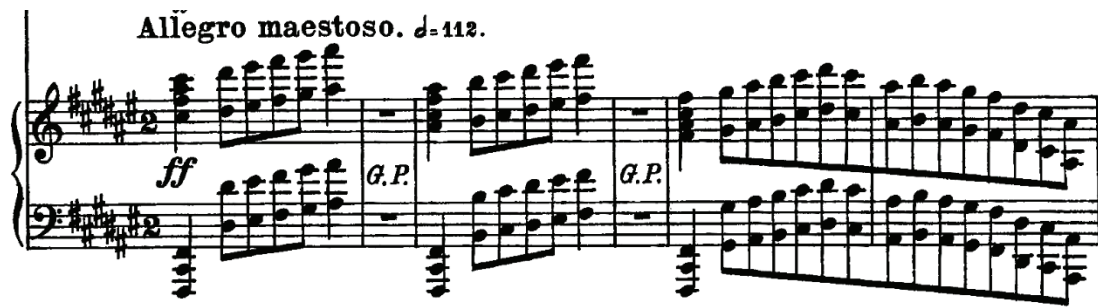
This movement is undoubtedly the most successful of the trio, with the light touch required of a scherzo and some ingenious idiomatic writing for the keyboard. It leads directly into the finale.

To understand the last movement, we have to consult the original title of this work. It was published in a group of three entitled *Trios concertants*. In other words, there is a concerto-like framing within which this trio is written, and the piano is unveiled in this finale as the undisputed soloist.

The movement is set in F# major and begins with – who knew? – more piano octaves.



In its opening section the piano provides a stormy ocean of keyboard sound ringing out against a wonderfully lyrical melody in the strings. There is no doubt, however, who the star of the show is:



It is useful to remember that the young César Franck was already a virtuoso pianist. But he was under the thumb of an abusive father who ruthlessly promoted him as the next Liszt. This undoubtedly influenced Franck's choice of keyboard scoring in this trio.

Fortunately, Franck's lyrical gift comes to the fore in his gracious second theme set in D flat (a re-spelling of the dominant C# major):



The development section is notable for its numerous references in the piano to the opening bars of the first movement (listen for it in little grumpy growlings in the bass) and the recapitulation features a really exciting coda that pays tribute once again to the first movement's scalar second theme.

Program notes by
Donald G. Gíslason 2024

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This list was created on Thursday, February 8, 2024, and includes bequests, gifts of cash, donations of securities, sponsorships and ticket donations dating back to January 1, 2023. Should you discover any errors or omissions, please accept our sincere apologies and contact Arlo Spring, Administration, Fundraising, and Box Office Coordinator, by email to arlo@vanrecital.com or by phone at 604.602.0363, so that any necessary corrections can be made.

There are many ways to support the VRS including making a philanthropic gift, sponsoring a concert and/or including us in your estate plans. If you would like more information, please contact us at 604.602.0363.

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