

Jon Kimura Parker

Piano

Inaugural Gessler Recital

Sunday, March 11th, 1984
Arts Club Theatre
Granville Island



VRS VANCOUVER
RECITAL
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Programme

Nocturne in C minor, Op. 48, No. 1	Chopin
Dichtungen (Fantasy in C Major), Op. 17	Schumann
1. Ruins—Legend	
2. Arch of Triumph	
3. Constellation	
Oiseaux Tristes	Ravel
Toccatà	Ravel

Intermission

Sonatina (1976)	David Duke
Quickly	
Nocturn—Slow, cantabile	
Fast	
Sonata in E Major, Longo 430	D. Scarlatti
Sonata in C Major, Longo 457	
Sonata in G Major, Longo 286	
Ballade No. 4 in F minor, Op. 52	Chopin

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The Gessler Recital

An excerpt from the program of Annie Fischer's recital in Vancouver on October 19th, 1982 . . .

"As the music of Mozart and Beethoven flows through the hall this evening, those of us privileged to have known Elizabeth Gessler will remember that this, too, was her music. When Dr. Eva Bene chose to honour the memory of her mother through a recital by the distinguished Hungarian pianist, Annie Fischer, she set before us a heart-warming example of how the past and the present can be joined to ensure the future. And there could be no more appropriate memorial to that slight figure, great spirit and superb musician than a recital bearing the name of Elizabeth Gessler."

Ian Docherty.

Funds derived from Annie Fischer's recital, and augmented by the Vancouver Foundation, were set aside to sponsor an annual concert by a talented young Canadian performer, preferably from British Columbia.

Elizabeth Gessler (1891—1978) was a student at the Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest, as was pianist, Annie Fischer. Mme. Gessler emigrated from Hungary in 1947 and came to live in Vancouver where she became well known as a pianist through her broadcasts on the CBC.

Meet the Artist

Twenty-four year old Jon Kimura Parker was born in Vancouver. He studied with Edward Parker and made his first public appearance at the age of five with the Vancouver Youth Orchestra. He continued his studies with Kum Sing Lee both at the Vancouver Academy of Music and later at the University of British Columbia.

In 1979 Mr. Parker went to New York to study with Adele Marcus at the Juilliard School. There he was the first winner of the Gina Bachauer Memorial Competition and, as a result, was one of the first students ever to receive a full scholarship. Mr. Parker received his Master's Degree in piano performance at the age of twenty-one, and he currently resides in New York where he is completing his doctoral studies.

Jon Kimura Parker has received over 200 first place awards in local, national and international competitions, including the ARCT Gold Medal for Canada, the International Concertino Praga Competition, the S.C. Eckhardt-Gramatté Competition and the du Maurier Search for the Stars. In 1981 Mr. Parker was awarded the first Sylva Gelber Award from the Canada Council for outstanding ability in piano performance. In 1982 he won First Prize in the International Piano Competition held in Viña del Mar, Chile, and as a result he has had several return engagements to South America for both solo and concert performances.

Last year Jon Kimura Parker was awarded both the Grand Prize and the First Prize in the Piano Category of the CBC Radio Talent Competition. He has given two highly acclaimed recital tours of Canada, and has performed with such conductors as Klaus Tennstedt, Jorge Mester, Sidney Harth and Harry Ellis Dickson. Mr. Parker has also performed in many of the major centres in the United States, and in 1983 he was a soloist with the Juilliard Orchestra when it toured 25 cities in Germany, Austria and Italy.

Most recently Jon Kimura Parker has received the first Virginia P. Moore Award of the Canada Council, and also the Petschek Award of the Juilliard School which brings with it a recital debut at New York's Alice Tully Hall in May.

Tonight's performance marks Jon Kimura Parker's first solo piano recital in Vancouver in six years, and the inaugural Gessler Recital for the Vancouver Recital Society.

Programme Notes

Edited by David Duke

Frederic Chopin (1810—1849)

Nocturne in C minor, Op. 48, No. 1

Ballade in F minor, Op. 52

"M. Frederic Chopin has, by some means or other which we cannot divine, obtained an enormous reputation all but too often refused to composers of ten times his genius. M. Chopin is by no means a putter down of commonplaces; but he is, what by many would be esteemed worse, a dealer in the most absurd and hyperbolic extravagances ... The entire works of Chopin present a motley surface of ranting hyperbole and excruciating cacophony." That, in any case, was the opinion of the London journal *Musical World* in 1841, the year which saw the composition of the Op. 48 *Nocturne* and the gestation of the the Op. 52 *Ballade*.

The 1841/2 season saw Chopin at the height of his powers as a composer. Roughly mid-point in his 10-year liason with George Sand, he had emerged from a period of semi-retirement from performing (he played no public concerts at all in 1840, and few in 1841); he was in delicate but not debilitating health and with a portfolio of masterworks in various stages of completion.

The first of the Op. 48 Nocturnes (probably written in Paris) is an extended, grandly conceived work. Author Herbert Weinstock concluded that "the C minor *Nocturne* is Chopin's major effort in that genre. So big, so varied, and so narrative-seeming a piece would not, in fact, have been appreciably misplaced as a fifth ballade."

The last of the four *Ballades*, Op. 52 was definitely composed in the sympathetic environment of Nohant, George Sand's family estate and favourite working retreat. Perhaps even more than the *Nocturne* it represents Chopin at his best: a complex, elaborate work with involved changes in material but with an unerringly, if personal, sense of organic unity.

Robert Schumann (1810—1856)

Dichtungen (Fantasy in C major), Op. 17

*'Through all of life's varied sounds, there runs one secret tone,
for the man who knows how to listen.'* F. Schlegel

1. Ruins—Legend
2. Arch of Triumph
3. Constellation

Regular VRS subscribers may recall pianist/musicologist Charles Rosen's performance of the Schumann *Fantasy* during the fall of 1982; for that concert, Charles Rosen explained:

The Schumann *Fantasy in C, Opus 17* (originally titled *Dichtungen*, or *Poetic Creations*) was written as a homage to Beethoven and dedicated to Liszt, who had proposed that a number of German composers each contribute a work to be sold to raise money for a monument to Beethoven: the *Fantasy* was Schumann's contribution.

With the opening measures, we are already in a different world from Beethoven's. The first note of the left hand is to be given a sharp accent but all others are played *piano* with the pedal down, and contain in this blurred form the notes of the main theme. The theme is played *fortissimo* by the right hand over the soft accompaniment—as if the melody gave shape to what is only indicated, unformed and chaotic, in the harmony. The first theme, like all the other themes of this movement, is derived from the last song of Beethoven's song cycle *To the Distant Beloved*, but we do not know that until the end of the movement: on the last page (which has also, astonishingly, the first C major cadence in a work that is, however, clearly in C major), we hear a literal quotation of Beethoven's theme, which has inspired everything in this movement. This is the first work in history in which the basic material is stated only at the end.

The first movement was originally called *Ruins* (Schumann cancelled the titles on publication). It is in something like sonata form with a trio (entitled *Legend*) in place of a development. The principal tempo mark is "to be played fantastically and passionately throughout."

The second movement, called *Arch of Triumph*, is in a march tempo: "Moderately, and always energetically." It has a relentless, almost hypnotic dotted rhythm for most of its length, with a much more lyrical middle section, heavily syncopated, and an exhilarating coda in a somewhat faster tempo, with the famous brilliant skips for both hands in a contrary motion.

The final movement is in a slow tempo, and was entitled *Constellation*. It originally ended like the first movement with the theme of *To the Distant Beloved*. One theme, however, recalls the entrance of the solo piano in the slow movement of the Beethoven *Emperor* Concerto and another theme based on a passage from his Seventh Symphony. This finale is an extraordinary expressive improvisation, repeated once with some variants. Schumann tried hard to compose away from the piano as Mozart and Beethoven had done, but he did his finest work improvising at the keyboard. The beautiful finale of the *Fantasy* is the result of much improvisation: it is, as Schumann himself said, the kind of music to which the composer would surrender himself for hours.

The motto on the first page of the *Fantasy* comes from the poet and philosopher Friedrich Schlegel, who wrote that manifesto of German romanticism.

Maurice Ravel (1875—1937)

Tocatta from *Le Tombeau de Couperin* (1917)

Oiseaux Tristes from *Miroirs* (1905)

Both the *Tocatta* and *Oiseaux Tristes* are quintessentially representative Ravel works. While only twelve years separate their composition, they neatly summarize two distinct sides of Ravel's musical personality. The *Tocatta* (the concluding section of *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, 1917) is all cool neoclassicism. Essentially baroque impulses join with the suave harmonies and reined approach to keyboard figuration of Ravel's mature idiom. *Le Tombeau* itself is both an homage to the long-dead Couperin and a commentary and tribute to six friends of the composer killed in World War I. The dichotomy between surface impartiality and serious subtext is a typically Ravellian paradox.

The earlier *Oiseaux Tristes* from *Miroirs* (1905) is entirely impressionistic; certainly no less polished, refined or elegant, but with a more frankly sensual purpose and with an intentionally improvisational design and structure.

David Duke (1950—)

Sonatina (1977)

Quickly
Nocturn
Fast

Vancouver-born David Duke studied musicology at the universities of British Columbia and North Carolina, and composition with "the doyenne of Canadian composers" Jean Coulthard. Completed in 1977, the *Sonatina* follows very much in the sonata tradition of Coulthard—the combination of classical formal processes with polytonal harmony—but the actual style of the work is marked by a more personal feeling for sonority (particularly in the strikingly dissonant final movement), and a boisterous, even sardonic sense of irony.

The opening movement immediately defines the territory—flashy bravado writing juxtaposed with more lyric passages. The central *nocturn* combines a cantabile theme with a mordent 12-tone/12-bar blues. The concluding movement is a flat-out showpiece with occasional cyclic references and sonorities from the earlier movements.

Jon Kimura Parker first performed the work at the Banff Centre in the summer of 1978 and has (to the composer's great pleasure) been playing it off and on ever since.

Domenico Scarlatti (1685—1757)

Three Sonatas

E major, L. 430
C major, L. 457
G major, L. 286

Though the music of Scarlatti is increasingly popular among the burgeoning crop of early music specialists exploring performance styles of the pre-classical eras, for most of this century the tenuous foothold his music maintained in the concert repertoire was exclusively through piano performances of the celebrated keyboard sonatas. In his position of staff composer to Maria Barbara, Infanta of Portugal, Scarlatti wrote over 500 single movement works for harpsichord, works so eminently successful that D.J. Grout has asserted them to be "as idiomatic for the harpsichord as Chopin or Debussy's (music) is for the piano ...". Here, of course, lies the controversy: many purists of highly ethical countenance decry the transfer of these glittering miniatures to the modern concert grand. On the other hand, perhaps the most eminent of all Scarlatti scholar/performers, Ralph Kirkpatrick, assisted Vladimir Horowitz with his famous piano readings of the works (and even quibbled that Horowitz's approach was if anything needlessly cautious and literal).

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