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Weiwuying
International Music Festival
衛武營國際音樂節

Artistic Director of Weiwuying International Music Festival Unsuk CHIN
Artistic Advisor Maris GOTHONI

Dezső RANKI

Dezső RANKI: Piano Cosmos

2025.4.19 Sat. 14:30

Weiwuying Concert Hall

Duration is 110 minutes with a 20-minute intermission.

Age guidance 7+



WEI WU YING

衛武營 國家藝術文化中心
國家表演藝術中心 National Performing Arts Center

Program

J. HAYDN: Variations in f minor, Hob. XVII: 6

C. DEBUSSY: *Images*

----- Intermission -----

C. DEBUSSY: *Children's Corner*, Little Suite for Piano

R. SCHUMANN: *Humoreske* in B-flat Major, Op. 20

Program Notes

J. HAYDN: Variations in f minor, Hob. XVII: 6

Written by WU Yu-ting

Starting in 1790, after the ESTERHÁZY family's new prince deprioritized music, encouraged by his agent Johann Peter SALOMON, HAYDN sought new success in England. There, he expanded orchestral sounds for local audiences and discovered the English "action piano," with deeper resonance and richer tonal colors than Viennese models.

Composed in 1793, the Variations in F minor showcase the piano's polyphonic textures and dynamic contrasts, emphasizing the instrument's qualities. The work's somber one may also reflect the loss of HAYDN's dear friend Maria von GENZINGER.

The piece features two themes. The first, in F minor, is melancholic with abundant chromatic shifts, expressing nuanced emotion and reflecting the influence of his junior, MOZART. The second, in F major, is bright, cheerful, and adorned with splendid arpeggios, as exchanges between the left and right hands evoke a dialogue between friends. Each theme undergoes two variations before returning to the minor theme, concluding with an ending like a sigh.

C. DEBUSSY: *Images*

Book 1

- I. Reflets dans l'eau
- II. Hommage à Rameau
- III. Mouvement

Book 2

- I. Cloches à travers les feuilles
- II. Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut
- III. Poissons d'or

Written by WU Yu-ting

DEBUSSY's two volumes of *Images* were completed in 1905 and 1907. Moving beyond earlier works like *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* and *Pelléas et Mélisande*, DEBUSSY's musical language here became more abstract. It retains the Impressionist style, capturing subtle tonal shifts like light and shadow, and uses Symbolist techniques to suggest inner emotions through concrete imagery. The melody becomes less distinct, relying on short motifs or phrases and moving away from traditional harmonic progressions.

"Reflets dans l'eau" portrays shifting reflections on water. The A section combines bass intervals, a three-note middle-register phrase (A-flat–F–E-flat), and winding upper chords, all moving alternately forward and backward, creating a tranquil yet subtly lively image. The high register then breaks into flowing textures, leading to a rapid B section that captures light's fleeting nature. Both sections reappear with heightened intensity before fading into serene stillness.

"Hommage à Rameau" honors the French Baroque master, J. RAMEAU. At the time he composed this work, DEBUSSY was editing a collection of RAMEAU's works for the publisher Durand, and lamenting the loss of French musical traditions due to the influence of foreign music. He uses modes with Eastern flavors to evoke solemnity, integrating RAMEAU's thirds and recitative phrases. The middle section shifts to intimate chromatic progression, as if a modern dialogue with RAMEAU.

"Mouvement" contrasts with the prior nostalgic piece, embodying end-of-century modernity after the Second Industrial Revolution. Repeated patterns evoke mechanical sounds, hinting at increased human uniformity and replicability. In the middle section, varied harmonies express dreams, fears, and destruction, reflecting DEBUSSY's vision of the future.

"Cloches à travers les feuilles" was inspired, as noted by biographer LALOY, by bell sounds DEBUSSY heard in Rahon, though it resembles Javanese gamelan more than church bells. It has an ABA structure. The A section uses whole-tone scales in varying speeds and directions, creating the effect of sounds drifting through foliage. The B section starts with a single melody and fast legato accompaniment, gradually building into a broad, lively sound, reminiscent of the dance passages in *Clair de Lune*.

"Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut" opens with mysterious chords, leading to a bell-like first theme in the sixth measure. It stabilizes on note B, from which a more fluid second theme emerges, like a fantasy triggered in the mind. The piece intertwines these two themes, portraying the interaction between the "external environment" and "inner fantasies."

"Poissons d'or" was likely inspired by a Japanese screen featuring goldfish. The music begins with rippling waves, followed by reverse syncopation mimicking tail movements. The A section repeats and is freely varied, creating a blurred rondo-like structure. In between are a B section with smooth descending lines, a C section with a slow jazzy rhythm, and an excited D section with hand crossings, expressing the fin-de-siècle desire for escapism.

C. DEBUSSY: *Children's Corner*, Little Suite for Piano

- I. Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum (Steps to Parnassus)
- II. Jimbo's Lullaby
- III. Serenade for the Doll
- IV. The Snow is Dancing
- V. The Little Shepherd
- VI. Golliwogg's Cakewalk

Written by WU Yu-ting

Children's Corner was published after the second book of *Images* and dedicated to DEBUSSY's three-year-old daughter, Emma. DEBUSSY's use of English titles, instead of French, highlight an "exotic" quality.

The first piece, "**Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum (Steps to Parnassus)**," refers to Parnassus, the mythical home of Apollo, symbolizing mastery in an art form. The title is also the name of mechanical exercise collections by CLEMENTI and CZERNY, to which the composer makes a playful allusion. Despite the repetitive sixteenth notes, it introduces various harmonic shifts and Arabesque figures, trying to find freedom within constraints.

"**Jimbo's Lullaby**" draws inspiration from Jumbo, an elephant at Paris's Jardin des Plantes, with the title misspelled as "Jimbo," hinting at DEBUSSY's unfamiliarity with English. The low melody reflects the elephant's heavy steps, with rhythmic staccato passages mimicking snores or dreamlike dancing, leading to two higher thematic reappearances, depicting Jimbo's deep sleep.

"**Serenade for the Doll**" is a playful, delicate waltz, with interwoven high and low registers evoking the fine texture of porcelain. The middle section transitions into a darker harmony, hinting at the doll's worries and making the listeners think the doll is alive.

"**The Snow is Dancing**" continues by mixing high and low registers to depict falling snow. The A section transitions from serene to stormy, while the B section contrasts high, repetitive B-flats with menacing low-register phrases, resembling circling hawks and prowling wolves.

"**The Little Shepherd**" portrays a shepherd playing three phrases on his flute, each answered by three echoes, evoking the solitude and beauty of a valley.

"Golliwogg's Cakewalk" is inspired by F. UPTON's popular Golliwogg stories. The "cakewalk" was a 19th-century dance where Black slaves mimicked the movements of white people, mocking their pretentious manners, with cakes awarded to the winner. Ragtime syncopation adds humor, while the middle section references WAGNER's Tristan und Isolde, parodying its sentimentality.

R. SCHUMANN: *Humoreske* in B-flat Major, Op. 20

Written by WU Yu-ting

Born in the mid-18th century, the German writer Jean PAUL was a major influence on SCHUMANN. He was known for creating two characters in his novels who were like different sides of the same person but with distinct personalities, exploring humans' complex dimensions. For example, in his novel *Flegeljahre*, which inspired SCHUMANN's piano piece *Butterflies*, the brothers Walt and Valt represent introversion and shyness versus passion and exuberance, illustrating the tension between "reality" and "dreams." This inspired SCHUMANN, in 1833, to establish an imaginary musical society called the "Davidsbündler," creating passionate characters like "Florestan" and introverted "Eusebius," to comment on the music world from different perspectives and oppose the banal.

The viewpoint of "humor" by PAUL deeply influenced SCHUMANN. The writer once said: "When man measures out the small world, as humor does, against the infinite world and sees them together, a kind of laughter results which contains pain and greatness." This is clearly reflected in a letter SCHUMANN wrote to Clara in 1839: "I haven't written to you for a week, have I? But I have always been thinking of you ... For a whole week, I have been sitting at the piano, composing, writing, laughing and crying. All of this can be found in Op. 20, the great *Humoreske* will be best depicted."

The piece depicts a melancholic soul in love and art. It consists of six sections: the first, "Einfach," begins tenderly and yearningly, gradually growing lively. The second, "Hastig," is chaotic, with harsh chords reflecting emotional conflict. The third, "Einfach und zart", features a three-voice imitation texture resembling introspection.

The fourth section, "Innig," is rich and expansive in F major, showcasing maturity. The fifth, "Sehr lebhaft," exudes Florestan's exuberance, reminiscent of SCHUMANN's bold pursuit of Clara against her father's wishes. It ends with a march titled "Mit einigem Pomp." The last section, "Zum Beschluss," does not end grandly but with tender, lingering phrases, building a quiet, enduring power.

Piano

Dezső RANKI



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Dezső RANKI is considered today one of the best Hungarian pianists. He is acknowledged in the classical (MOZART, BEETHOVEN), the romantic (SCHUBERT, SCHUMANN) and the modern (BARTÓK, KURTÁG) repertoire as well. He has played in the most important venues in Europe, Japan and America, including Queen Elizabeth Hall and Wigmore Hall in London, Châtelet and Théâtre de la Ville in Paris, Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Wiener Festwochen in Vienna, as well as venues in Berlin, Milan, San Francisco and Toronto, and more.

RANKI is guest at the most famous festivals as Lucerne, Ascona, Prague Spring, Weimar, Montpellier, Grange de Meslay, Roque d'Anthéron, Folle Journée de Nantes and Tokyo, Fêtes romantiques de Nohant, Lockenhaus, etc.

Dezső RANKI studied at the Franz-LISZT Academy with Pál KADOSA. He began his international career after he won the Robert SCHUMANN Competition in Germany in 1969. Since then, he has been giving regularly concerts in most of the European countries, North and South America as well as Japan. Besides the recitals, he has performed with orchestras such as the Berlin Philharmonic, London Philharmonic, BBC Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Orchestre National de France, Konzerthausorchester Berlin, Deutsche Radio Philharmonie, Stuttgart Kammerorchester, Budapest Festival Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique Royal de Liège, Warsaw Philharmonic, NHK Symphony Orchestra under Zubin MEHTA, Kurt SANDERLING, Jeffrey TATE, Frans BRÜGGEN, Ivan FISCHER, Lorin MAAZEL, Daniele GATTI, Zoltan KOCSIS,

Antoni WIT, Douglas BOYD, Nikolaj ZNAIDER, etc.

Recently he has performed with the Deutsche Radio Philharmonie Saarbrücken under Michel TABACHNIK, Orchestre national Montpellier under Michael SCHØNWANDT and Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra under Markus STENZ.

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4.20 Sun. 14:30 Concert Hall

Conductor | CHIEN Wen-pin / Piano | Dezső RANKI / Kaohsiung Symphony Orchestra

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