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PREVIEW
NOTES

Arnaldo Cohen, piano
Wednesday, October 12 – 7:30 PM
American Philosophical Society

Background

Known for his musical authority and stylish virtuosity, Brazilian-born Arnaldo Cohen has established a special niche with our keyboard audience – in no small part due to a bravura performance of Liszt's B Minor Sonata in 2008. Thus an event it will be when Cohen celebrates the Hungarian master's 200th birthday year, revisiting some of his most cherished works in this all-Liszt recital.

All-Liszt Program

Franz Liszt

Born: October 22, 1811 in Raiding, Hungary

Died: July 31, 1886 in Bayreuth, Germany

La Vallée d'Obermann

Composed: 1848-55

Last PCMS performance: Andreas Haefliger in 2011

Duration: 15 minutes

La Vallée d'Obermann (The Valley of Obermann) may be the most profound work in Liszt's *Années de Pèlerinage* collection. A melancholy theme establishes the mood here to depict not just a locale, but the eponymous character in an 1804 novel by Etienne Jeane Senancour, who, disheartened by misfortune, withdraws to the country to seek solace. Cast in three sections, the piece contains themes that are beautiful, transforming from sadness and gloomy pensiveness at the outset to a brighter, if not quite radiant mood in the last section. It is a philosophical, not emotional triumph that Liszt arrives at in the end.

Sonetto 104 del Petrarca

Composed: 1837-49

Last PCMS performance: Russell Sherman in 2003

Duration: 7 minutes

This is probably the most popular of the three Petrarch sonnets, which are derived from songs Liszt wrote for tenor voice in 1838-39 and later transcribed for piano. Its melody has a fiery emotional quality, perfect for conveying its theme of unfulfilled love.

Impromptu "Nocturne"

Composed: 1872

Last PCMS performance: PCMS premiere

Duration: 4 minutes

Liszt's Impromptu is an expressive composition in the nocturne style popular in the late 19th century. Reflecting a meditative and solitary state of mind, it is a fine example of Liszt's later piano compositions in their most mature and elegant form.

La Lugubre Gondola

Composed: 1886

Last PCMS performance: Llyr Williams in 2008

Duration: 14 minutes

One of Liszt's darkest, most morbid piano works is based on a premonition the composer had while in Venice that Wagner would die there and that his body would be borne by a funeral gondola through the streets. Wagner did indeed die in Venice the following February.

Spanish Rhapsody

Composed: 1863

Last PCMS performance: Murray Perahia in 1990

Duration: 13 minutes

Liszt's 1845 tour of Lisbon and Madrid inspired this piece. An elaborate flourish sets the stage for a passacaglia on *La Folia*, whose proud gestures are worked to a brilliant *Jota Aragonesa* peroration in Liszt's best virtuoso style.

Sonata in B Minor

Composed: 1851-53

Last PCMS performance: Marc-André Hamelin in 2010

Duration: 29 minutes

Liszt made the sonata form his own in this innovative and unique one-movement work. In it, Liszt presents what is considered to be his finest example of the musical technique of continuous "thematic transformation." Wagner described it as beautiful "beyond all conception" and "sublime."