

SOLILOQUY

2:00PM

SATURDAY 14 OCTOBER 2023

REARDON THEATRE



Kristian Chong *Piano*

Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756 – 1791)

Fantasia in C minor, K. 475

Adagio – Allegro – Andantino – Più allegro – Primo tempo

A miniature masterpiece for solo piano, the Fantasia in C minor, K. 475 was written in May 1785, about three and a half years after Mozart's move to Vienna from Salzburg. It was conceived as a kind of companion piece to his Piano Sonata No. 14 in the same key, both works being dedicated to Therese von Trattner, one of Mozart's greatest pupils and godmother to his daughter Anna Maria.

Mozart often saved the key of C minor for his darkest and most dramatic expressions, and this Fantasia is a perfect example, full of daring harmonic and dynamic contrasts. Moreover, the relative freedom of the fantasia form gives us some idea of what Mozart the improviser was capable of. From the ominous opening chords, the musical narrative moves through an extraordinary range of moods, from lyrical tenderness to fierce agitation and anguish, presaging the gravity and intensity of Beethoven's solo piano music. In the words of pianist Tony Chen Lin, the Fantasia "...unfolds like a Greek tragedy, a hero's battle with his own inexorable fate, a struggle between life and death." © Douglas Rutherford, 2023

Franz SCHUBERT (1797 – 1828)

Piano Sonata in B \flat major, D. 960

1. *Molto moderato*

2. *Andante sostenuto*

3. *Scherzo. Allegro vivace con delicatezza – Trio – Da capo*

4. *Allegro ma non troppo – Presto*

The Piano Sonata in B \flat major is Schubert's last piano sonata, composed in a remarkably short space of time during the final months of his life, along with the piano sonatas in C minor, D. 958 and A major, D. 959. All three sonatas are conceived on a massive scale, and together they represent the culmination of Schubert's creative evolution in the genre of the piano sonata. As with so much of his music, the sonatas were only published many years after his death, and remained neglected throughout the 19th century. Now they are a core part of the piano repertory, acknowledged among other things for their mature, individual style, intricate formal design and rare depths of emotional expression.

Despite the last three sonatas having acquired an aura of otherworldliness, even of Schubert gazing into the abyss, the final sonata in B \flat major is perhaps the most easy-going of the three. According to the musicologist Richard Wigmore, "There is pathos and a sense of evanescence in the sonata but also ... exuberance, humour and a sheer zest for life." The first movement opens with a gentle, radiantly beautiful melody, suddenly interrupted by a mysterious trill in the bass. For the pianist Mitsuko Uchida, this movement presents us with "a glimpse of eternity, where life and death have ended".

An atmosphere of timelessness and profound solemnity pervades the second movement, but for a full-blooded, almost heroic middle section. Schubert pulls us out of this ethereal realm gently with the mercurial Scherzo, its playfulness offset by the wistful nostalgia of the Trio. A rollicking rondo-finale in the Hungarian style brings us fully back into the light of day and caps off the sonata. Though Schubert breaks up the tumult with reminiscences of sunnier, more carefree times, a spirit of wild joy dominates the movement and finally carries the day. © Douglas Rutherford, 2023