

Fall 10-3-2010

Marshall University Music Department Presents a Guest Artist, Harsha Abeyaratne, piano, A Chopin Celebration

Harsha Abeyaratne

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DEPARTMENT of MUSIC

Program

presents

Guest Artist
Harsha Abeyaratne, piano

A Chopin Celebration

Smith Recital Hall
Sunday, October 3, 2010
3:00 p.m.

Valse Brillante in a minor, Op. 34, No.2

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

Sonata No.2 in Bb minor, Op. 35

Grave-Doppio Movimento

Scherzo

Marche Funèbre ("Funeral March")

Presto

Intermission

Fantasy in f minor, Op. 49

Etude in c# minor, Op. 25, No. 7

Scherzo in Bb minor, Op. 31

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Program Notes

Valse Brillante in a minor, Op. 34, No.2 is slow, pensive, and expressive. The opening theme has a nostalgic cello-like melody. Chopin was very fond of this *waltz*. In fact, most of the *waltzes* he liked were slow in tempo and did not have the spirit of a typical waltz. In this piece, he reminisces about memories of a ball: bright costumes, sparkling lights, and graceful dancers.

Of all Chopin's works, the *nocturnes* (night pieces) are the most introspective. These pieces generally have an ABA structure, with the 'B section' being more dramatic. In *Nocturne in c minor*, Op. 48, the middle section, though, is unusual in that it has imposing, Liszt-type octaves. Yet, it is considered to be Chopin's finest nocturne.

Sonata in Bb minor, Op. 35 has four movements. *Grave-Doppio Movimento* is dramatic and is in sonata allegro form. In the recapitulation, though, one does not hear the first theme. The *Scherzo* is full of abrupt leaps and contrasts well with the slower and lyrical *trio*. Chopin wrote the well know *Marche Funèbre* two years before composing this sonata and then decided to insert it as the third movement. The middle section of this march, in Db major, relieves the grave quality of the prevailing shades. In the last and short movement, *Presto*, both hands--an octave apart--play agitated, chromatic passages from the beginning till the very end.

Fantasy in f minor, Op. 49 a brilliant and difficult masterpiece, is structurally one of his most successful designs. It begins in march-time and includes a two bar motive of a Polish folk song. Improvisatory and march-like passages repeat in three different keys interspersed by a short prayer-like *lento* section.

Etude in c# minor, OP. 25, No. 7 is nicknamed 'the cello etude' because of the slow, lyrical melody in the bass. Throughout the etude, there is a beautiful interplay between the left hand and a subordinate melody played by the right hand.

The work scherzo means 'a joke'. In *Scherzo in Bb minor*, Op. 31, the introductory three bars represent this witty character. Each of the scherzo and trio is repeated prior to a full fledged development section. The scherzo then returns, only to give way into a powerful and climactic coda.

Biography

Harsha Abeyaratne, Pianist and Associate Professor of Music at Muskingum University, maintains an active career as a soloist, accompanist, chamber musician, and pedagogue. He has performed in several cities that include Manhattan, Chicago, Charleston, West Virginia; Jacksonville, Florida; and Portland, Oregon. He has also given solo recitals in his native country, Sri Lanka, one of which was sponsored by the United States Embassy in Colombo. Critics have referred to his playing as "poetic" and "passionate." Abeyaratne has performed with, amongst others, saxophonist, George Wolfe, trombonist, Mike Stroeher, and jazz violinist, Randy Sabien, who are all well respected musicians. Widely being sought out as a pedagogue, he has been asked to adjudicate competitions in the Ohio and West Virginia regions, such as the OMTA/Graves piano competition, Tuscarawas Ribbon Festival, and the Thursday Music Club.

Abeyaratne's performances in this past academic year include concerts featuring works of Chopin at Muskingum University and Grace Lutheran Church (Dover, Ohio); a chamber recital, at Muskingum University, as member of the *Alato* faculty trio; and Rachmaninoff's vivacious *First Piano Concerto* with the Colombo Symphony Orchestra in Colombo, Sri Lanka. In April of this year, he was one of two recipients to receive the Ball State University School of Music Alumni Achievement Citation Award for the 2009/10 year. This fall, as part of his sabbatical work, Abeyaratne is studying with esteemed pianist and teacher, Peter Takacs, who is Professor of Piano at the Oberlin Conservatory.

Abeyaratne, who received his tenure in 2009, teaches piano, piano accompanying, music theory, and aural skills at Muskingum University. He received both his Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees from Lewis and Clark College and his Masters of Music as well as his Doctor of Arts in music degrees from Ball State University. Abeyaratne has previously taught at Manchester College and Marshall University. His former piano teachers include Mary Billimoria, Ann Schaffert Miller, and Robert Palmer. Abeyaratne is an avid tennis player and resides in New Concord, Ohio.

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