



James Martínez, piano
*A senior recital in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for a Bachelor of Arts in Music*

May 15, 2010
Saturday, 3:00 p.m.
Davidson Music Center
Room 218

CAL POLY
SAN LUIS OBISPO

Sponsored by the Cal Poly Music Department & College of Liberal Arts



Program
Senior Recital
James Martinez, Piano

Sonata XVII in D Major, K. 119, Longo 415..... Domenico Scarlatti
(1685-1757)

Sonata XII in A-Flat Major, Op. 26, No. 12..... Ludwig van Beethoven
Andante con variazioni (1770-1827)
Allegro molto
Marcia funebre
Allegro

Intermission

The Garden of Eden..... William Bolcom
I. Old Adam (Two-Step) (b. 1938)

Fantasia, Op. 49 Frédéric Chopin
Tempo di marcia—Lento sostenuto (1810-1849)

Program Notes

Scarlatti *Sonata XVII in D major, K. 119*

Although Italian by blood, Domenico Scarlatti became so closely associated with Spain that his name was changed to Domingo Escarlatti. He was born in Naples, Italy, on October 26, 1685. Staying loyal to royal families kept Scarlatti in business with a steady income. In Rome, from 1709-1713, he composed for the private court of exiled Polish queen Maria Casimira, where he wrote a number of unsuccessful operas and other works. He was employed as *maestro di capella* to the Portuguese ambassador to the Vatican in 1714, then later moved to Lisbon in 1719 to advance his musical career as a keyboardist. By 1724, he was employed by the Portuguese king John V, and, through this royal family, remained employed for rest of his life.

In Portugal, Scarlatti had a significant role as music educator to the king's daughter, Maria Barbara. Though records never say he was in love with her, the dedication to his pupil shows at least a mutual affection, for he followed her to Madrid after she married Spanish Crown Prince Fernando in 1728. Compared to his output in Italy, Scarlatti produced a much larger number of works while employed by Maria Barbara. He wrote approximately 550 keyboard sonatas—most of them were written for the harpsichord, but a few were for the organ and the fortepiano (the predecessor to the piano). The seals of the Spanish and Portuguese coats of arms were stamped on the entire collection, proving that most, if not all, were dedicated to Maria Barbara.

Written mainly as *essercizi*, or exercises, for his dear pupil, Scarlatti wrote the sonata collection to provide Maria Barbara with music that would challenge and develop her skills as a keyboardist. One of the prominent characteristics of *Sonata XVII* is Scarlatti's intention of using musical devices that mimic the violin. During many of the playful, optimistic areas of music, the player's arms must cross in order to play intervals that are easier on a violin. For a pianist, it adds a technique that is both daring and visually engaging. More evidence of violin-like writing is Scarlatti's use of larger leaps across the piano. These large leaps are simple for a violinist, because of the violin's adjacent strings, but much more challenging for a pianist.

Another appealing feature of *Sonata XVII* is its use of Baroque ornaments. The piece has 28 trills, a device most widely used in 18th-century music where two pitches rapidly alternate. It also has a special *tremulo* ornament that calls for the rapid repetition of a single note. Scarlatti first uses the ornament close to the beginning of the piece, shortly after the right hand makes a rapid run down the piano and the music momentarily pauses. The *tremulo* is heard right when the music becomes more stressful, and it sounds like rapid thumping. It is one of the many decorative techniques that can be seen throughout the collection of Scarlatti's sonatas.

Beethoven's *Sonata No. 12 in A-flat Major, Op. 26*

Ludwig van Beethoven's contributions to music cast a shadow that intimidated many great composers who followed him. Born in Bonn, Germany, on December 17, 1770, Beethoven was a piano prodigy. His father, Johann, helped him attain work playing the harpsichord and organ for various local groups; Johann himself was also a musician. By age 18, Beethoven had already exceeded his father's musical talent and assumed the responsibilities as the "bread-winner" of the family. His earliest works came while he was still living in his hometown, but the core of his music was written in Vienna, where Beethoven moved in 1792.

In Vienna, where Beethoven would remain for the rest of his life, opportunity for public performance far exceeded that which Bonn could offer for young Beethoven. After befriending Haydn, already a legend and composer, Beethoven was able to have many of his works played at the same concerts in which Haydn performed his famous "London symphonies." Beethoven also made friends among the nobility, which led to contracts for new works and more public performances. By 1799, publishers were in bidding wars for the rights to Beethoven's latest works.

The year 1801 proved to be a year of both success and hardship for Beethoven. While in love with a 17-year old countess, Giuletta Guicciardi, he completed one of his most famous works, the *Moonlight Sonata* (Op. 27, No. 2). But around the same time, he began to isolate himself from the public and refused to attend social gatherings. Beethoven finally confessed to his close friends that his hearing had become increasingly problematic. Realizing that he faced total deafness, Beethoven wrote his "Heiligenstadt Testament" in 1802, a personal testimony in which he expressed his despondency, but declared he would not try to commit suicide. Even in the darkest hours of his life, he still managed to compose some of his greatest compositions; between 1802 and 1812, he wrote the majority of his symphonies, three piano trios, five string quartets, the opera *Fidelio*, and six piano sonatas. Included among the six piano sonatas is Beethoven's *Sonata No. 12 in A-flat Major, Op. 26*. Written in 1802, *Sonata No. 12 in A-flat Major* is the first of a group of surprising sonatas in which Beethoven set aside the use of the traditional sonata form. Instead of writing the first movement with an exposition, development, and recapitulation, Beethoven wrote a theme with five variations. The theme initially sounds like a love song, but takes a number of surprising turns. In the second variation, the melody is placed in the left hand and becomes much more rapid. During the third variation, the melody is transformed into a minor mode and the mood seems much more stressful. In the fourth variation, the mood lightens and the music sounds much more like a series of jokes and funny gestures. The fifth and final variation ends the movement sweetly with smooth legato melodies.

Another unexpected development was that instead of putting the four movements into a standard "fast, slow, dance, fast" order, the rapid "scherzo and trio" dance movement is played second. The second movement is fast-paced, radiant, and beautiful. The scherzo, which literally means "a joke," is a work

written in triple meter, meaning there are three beats to each measure of music. Beethoven, having a sense of humor, may have chosen to use a scherzo based on the fact that he altered the standard order of movements. It is written in contrapuntal style, meaning that a musical phrase is stated in one hand and is then mimicked by the opposite hand. The phrase can also be transposed to different keys, and can be played in inverted or retrograde motions. In this case, the melody is played by the right hand and repeated by the left hand. The trio, also in triple meter, has a much softer tone in comparison to the scherzo, and contains no counterpoint.

The third movement, “*Marcia Funebre sulla morte d’un Eroe*” (Funeral March on the Death of a Hero), also represents a shift in the characteristics of Beethoven’s writing. Some historians suggest the hero Beethoven wrote about was Napoleon Bonaparte—the French officer who proclaimed himself emperor of France at the same time the piece was written. It is one of Beethoven’s first works that is considered “programmatic,” meaning that it is supposed to portray specific imagery. It is the slowest and darkest of all the movements, adding a very somber mood to the sonata.

Although no structural surprises are apparent in the final movement, “*Allegro*,” Beethoven still manages to create drama by writing music that sounds both carefree and intense. It features an extensive amount of counterpoint, transposing melodies to different keys and inverting the motions. It is written in rondo form, meaning a refrain is repeated several times with new themes in between (ABACA). Its general mood is vibrant and optimistic, but the intensity comes from the fact that the piece is to be played very fast and the hands of the player must constantly shift into numerous positions. Another reason the piece has forceful moments is that the “C” section of the work sounds much more dramatic and powerful than the other sections. Written just after Beethoven’s realization that he was inexorably going deaf, it is a true testament to Beethoven’s mastery.

Bolcom’s Garden of Eden—Old Adam

Composers and musicians can make contributions to music without ever gaining worldwide popularity. Such is the case for William Bolcom, whose name still remains unknown to most people. Born in Seattle, Washington, on May 26, 1938, this pianist and composer helped resuscitate American ragtime music after a 25-year decline in the style’s popularity due to the rise of jazz. While living as a composer-in-residence at New York University School of Arts in the early 1970s, Bolcom and other rag enthusiasts began performing and recording the works of classic rag composers, as well as their own compositions. Soon enough, the sounds of ragtime recaptured the public’s attention. Known as the American Ragtime Revival of the 1970s, the response to Bolcom’s and others’ performances was a major rebirth of the style.

Within Bolcom’s 22 rags, some use techniques from the original style of ragtime, while others show the influence of jazz. Appearing as the first selection in Bolcom’s set of four rag pieces titled *The Garden of Eden*, “*Old Adam*” has

definitive characteristics from both types of music. Since he had the Biblical story of Adam and Eve in mind, Bolcom probably wrote this piece thinking of a character with a good heart. Its subtitle is “Two-Step,” a term coined from a dance of the late 19th century. In fact, most early rags were written as two-steps. Through most of “Old Adam,” left-hand single (or doubled) bass notes are sounded on the strong beats, alternating with chords played on the weak beats.

The most obvious feature of ragtime is its use of syncopation, which produces most of this piece’s appeal. Syncopation refers to the right hand’s technique of playing unexpected strong musical accents on the weaker beats. The “chicken scratch” is a fine example of the syncopation found in this piece. The jerky, fast rhythms heard throughout “Old Adam” are made to emulate the uneven motions of a chicken. The dynamic range of the piece covers all levels of volume, from the faintest of sounds to the loudest of rooster crows. Quite reminiscent at times of a joyous walk through a park, Bolcom has written a piece that’s all about sunshine and no clouds!

Chopin’s *Fantasia in F-minor*, Op. 49

Although he is the composer whose music is said to be the best representation of pure Romanticism, Chopin himself performed only about 30 public concerts throughout his entire life. But through a network of wealthy aristocrats, Chopin made money by teaching (charging ridiculous amounts for lessons) and, more notably, by selling his works. By turning away from the usual genres of the concert hall (variations, rondos, concert pieces), Chopin popularized his own musical style by focusing on the composition of mazurkas, etudes, and nocturnes.

Nearly Chopin’s entire catalogue of music is written for solo piano. He was well aware of the capabilities of the pianos available during his lifetime and knew how to make the best of their expressive qualities, despite the fact that his hands were considered small when compared to other virtuosic legends of the piano. It was in Paris that Polish-born Chopin, at age 22, made a name for himself; he was applauded by other musical giants in Paris such as Liszt and Berlioz. And, it was through Liszt that Chopin met Aureore Dudevant, known as George Sand, a prolific novelist who remained his lover up until the last few years of his life.

The love affair between the two was of great importance to Chopin. In 1836, the two moved into the Nohant manor, Aureore’s cottage located in central France. They stayed there for eight years; these years were the happiest and most productive of Chopin’s life. The quality of Chopin’s music took a turn for the better, becoming increasingly technical and daring in its harmonies and coloration. It was in the summer of 1841, at the Nohant manor, that Chopin composed his *Fantasia in F-minor*, Op. 49. He worked hard on the *Fantasia*, telling George Sand, “I cannot give [it] enough polish.”

If the underlying theme of the entire *Fantasia* could be put into one word, that word would be “surprise.” The first major section begins as a slow, somber march. It hints at a mysterious future, which builds to expectations that are thwarted. After transitioning to a more delicate march, Chopin uses drawn-out single-note melodies to create cringing tension. Large, spiraling sweeps, both

up and down the piano, speed up to impressive bouts of momentary hope and gloom. Part of this piece's appeal lies not only in the virtuosic runs all over the piano, but also within the destinations of these runs. In many cases, a listener will anticipate a valiant phrase ending, only to be led to a more heart-rending conclusion. Such instances almost always occur after the delicate areas of this piece.

The rapid march found in the middle of the first section is, without a doubt, the most distinctive theme of the *Fantasia*. It sounds irrelevant to all previous material, and its entrance is a surprise. It almost resembles a victorious Polish soldier happily trotting through downtown Paris. Its novelty derives from the fact that it is the only theme whose notes are short and separated.

A listener can never relax during the *Fantasia* because he never knows what Chopin will toss in next. The best example would be after the first theme of the second major section. It begins slowly and quietly, so it catches its listeners completely off-guard with one of the harshest-sounding chords of the *Fantasia*. Followed by more rapid runs up and down the piano, the piece then repeats themes previously played in section one. As the *Fantasia* reaches its end, a spiraling run up the piano slowly fades away, suggesting that all has been resolved exactly like the first major section. Chopin then surprises his listeners one last time, concluding the piece with two hammered chords.

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