

**School of Music**  
**Faculty of Fine Arts**  
University of Victoria

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**University  
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School of  
Music

SCHOOL OF MUSIC • UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

# FACULTY CONCERT SERIES

## BRUCE VOGT

PIANO

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**Friday, February 27, 2015 • 8:00 p.m.**

Phillip T. Young Recital Hall

MacLaurin Building, University of Victoria

Adults: \$18 / Students, seniors, alumni: \$14

## PROGRAM

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Rondo in A minor, K. 511 (1787) W.A. Mozart  
(1756–91)

Aux Cyprès de la Villa d'Este No. 1: Thrénodie Franz Liszt  
*from Années de Pèlerinage, Troisième Année* (c. 1877) (1811–86)

Variations on a Bach motive: F. Liszt  
Weinen, Klagen S. 180 (1862)

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### INTERMISSION

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*Beverages and snacks available at the  
concession located in the lounge.*

Die Taubenpost (The Courier Pigeon) Franz Schubert  
(poem by Johann Gabriel Seidl, 1804–1875) (1797–1828)

Sonata No. 21 in B flat major, D. 960 (1828) F. Schubert  
*Molto moderato*  
*Andante sostenuto*  
*Menuetto*  
*Rondo*

## PROGRAM NOTES

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### W.A. Mozart

The *Rondo in A minor, Kv. 511* was written in 1787 for no known commission. It is certainly one of Mozart's most original and personal compositions. A powerfully chromatic harmonic language combined with a unique contrapuntal mastery dominate the various statements of the rondo theme as well as the two extensive episodes and the coda. Mozart, along with Chopin, is the greatest master of expressive ornamentation, and the way in which each statement of the main theme is intensified through elaboration is unforgettably poignant.

### Franz Liszt

Liszt's last years were spent teaching and composing. He did nothing to make his compositions known and even discouraged his students from playing them. "Yet there still remain several things for me to say, irrespective as to whether they may be quickly understood or recognized. Sometime when I am no longer of this earth, the rest will find itself. I can calmly await the event while I go on working, and meanwhile composedly expiate my virtuoso reputation with the disapproval my compositions have excited." But it was not until the enthusiastic endorsement of Bartók and Busoni that these late works were recognized for what they are—a most astounding anticipation of major new paths which music was to follow. In their radical simplicity, obsessive rhythms and strange harmonies, they take the listener to the very brink of tonality.

Liszt spent a good part of each year from 1864 onwards in the Villa d'Este—a 16<sup>th</sup>-century castle in a park in Tivoli near Rome. It is famous for its ancient cypresses, which became the inspiration for *Aux Cyprès de la Villa d'Este* (To the Cypresses of the Villa d'Este). This work is the first of two threnodies, two ruminations on the ephemeral nature of existence. "For three whole days, in September 1877, Liszt spent every hour of sunlight and as much of night as was made visible by the moon, in admiration of the cypresses. They obsessed his thoughts to the exclusion of all else." (Sacheverell Sitwell)

Liszt's *Variations on a Motive from Bach's Cantata "Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen"* were written in 1862 after the death of Liszt's eldest child Blandine. Its atmosphere reflects the darkening repetitions of the chromatic falling bass line from Bach's *Cantata No. 12: Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen... sind der Christen Tränenbrot* (Weeping, complaints, sorrows, fears are the Christian's lot). These variations might better be termed "Passacaglia" like the first chorus of Bach's *Cantata*. In fact, after the introduction, Liszt begins by quoting Bach's

opening chorus, using it as a point of departure for the expression of unrelentingly grief, rage, despair, dark resignation. The final section of Bach's *Cantata* is the chorale *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan* (What God does is for the best). In Liszt's work, this same chorale comes as a miraculous consolation after a dramatic build-up of almost unbearable chaos.

## Franz Schubert

*"Schubert's tonality is as wonderful as star clusters, and a verbal description of it is as dull as a volume of astronomical tables."* [D. F. Tovey]

"The art of Music has here entombed a rich treasure but yet much fairer hopes." Those are the words inscribed on Schubert's tombstone. Certainly we can think with regret of the many works that he surely would have created had he been given something of a normal life span, and yet his achievement in his brief span of active composing years is remarkable and needs no disclaimer.

Schubert, at the time of his death, was well known only to his circle of friends and even they knew him mostly as a song composer. His achievement as a composer of instrumental music was not at all understood. How could it be, when most of his instrumental works were not yet published? Many of them would not be heard for decades. His nine symphonies (seven complete), fifteen string quartets, many other chamber works, twenty-one piano sonatas (thirteen complete), masses, other choral works and much, much more—these were almost all unknown. When these works were finally being heard and pondered over, they were too often patronized as formally flawed. Even fifty years ago it was not uncommon to hear many of Schubert's instrumental works characterized as undisciplined. There were a few champions of note. Liszt and Brahms both recognized the greatness of Schubert as an instrumental composer, and in 1894, Antonín Dvořák wrote these words: "[He] is never at fault in his means of expression, while mastery of form came to him spontaneously... Schubert's musical individuality is unmistakable..."

The stature of Schubert's piano sonatas took a particularly long time to be recognized. It was long thought that it was only in shorter works—such as his *Impromptus* and *Moments Musicaux*—that his genius for instrumental writing could thrive. His sonatas were typically seen as diffuse and overly repetitive. It was not until the 1920s, especially with the advocacy of the Austrian pianist Artur Schnabel, that some of the sonatas began to be established in the repertoire, and it is only in the last few decades that competent editions of his sonatas have appeared. In his lifetime only three sonatas were published and yet at least ten of the twenty-one sonatas are major works.

The last year of Schubert's life was marked by growing public acclaim for the composer's works, but also by the gradual deterioration of his health. On March 26, 1828, a concert of his music in Vienna was a great success. There was also renewed interest in publishing his works.

Schubert's health had been precarious since 1822–23 when he contracted syphilis. In spite of this he led a relatively normal life until September 1828 when his health began to decline more precipitously. A move to his brother Ferdinand's house, at the advice of his doctor, may have worsened his condition. The poor sanitary conditions in that part of the city may have led to the typhoid fever which took his life on November 19 of that year. Yet, until the very last weeks of his life he composed steadily and in the last few months wrote some of his greatest works including the song cycle *Winterreise*, the song collection *Schwanengesang*, the *Mass in E flat major*, D. 950, the *String Quintet in C*, D. 956 and the *Piano Trio in E flat*, D. 929. In September of that year he completed his last three piano sonatas.

Certainly Schubert recognized the importance of these last works. One can hear both impatience and a certain pride and confidence in the letter he wrote to a prospective publisher less than seven weeks before his death:

October 2nd, 1828

To Schott and Probst: (to Probst)

Sir! I have been asking myself when the trio [*Piano Trio in E flat*, not published in full until 1886] will finally appear? Have you not yet decided the opus number? It is No. 100. I await its appearance with longing. Among other things I have composed three sonatas for pianoforte which I should like to dedicate to Hummel. I have also set several songs by Heine from Hamburg which were extraordinarily well-liked here [the six *Heine Lieder* subsequently published as part of *Schwanengesang*] and finally a quintet for two violins, one viola and two violoncellos [*String Quintet in C*, D. 956, opus 163, which was not published until 1853]. I have played the sonatas in several places to great applause, but the quintet is to be rehearsed shortly. If any of these compositions seem to be suitable for you, please let me know. Respectfully yours Frz. Schubert.

It is tempting to hear in the last *Sonata in B flat major*, D. 950, a kind of valediction, a farewell to life, a profound acceptance of the mystery of death, of oblivion. Yet clearly Schubert did not realize he was so soon to die: while on his sick-bed, he wrote to his friend Schober, asking for more novels of James Fenimore Cooper. This is the equivalent of a modern convalescent requesting more novels of Dan Brown—an unlikely request indeed to be made from one's death-bed! However Schubert certainly knew that he had not long to live—there was no cure for syphilis at that time.

The three last sonatas were not published in his lifetime. Instead his brother Ferdinand sold the autographs to the publisher Anton Diabelli, who published them in 1839 with a dedication to Robert Schumann, who had been one of the first to recognize the genius of Schubert's instrumental works.

The range of mood in this last sonata is extraordinary. The meditative mood of the first movement sinks into one of despair in the second movement, and thence to lighter celebration in the last two movements. It was a matter of confusion to the later romantics how Schubert could follow music of profound depths and sorrow with joyous, playful music. But this is partly, perhaps, the Viennese spirit—a kind of illustration of the Austrian attitude—that “The situation is desperate, but not serious”.

And yet, more profoundly, Schubert did not see the fact of death as tragic. For Schubert, death was a friend, the great consoler. In a letter to his father, written in 1825, he made this clear in teasing reference to one of his brothers:

My best greetings to [brother] Ferdinand...I am certain that he has been ill 77 times again, and fancied himself 9 times at least on the point of death—as though dying were the worst evil we mortals had to face. If only he could see these marvellous mountains and lakes, whose aspect threatens to crush us or swallow us up, he would become less enamoured of the tiny span of human life, and would be ready joyfully to give his body to the earth, to be quickened by its incomprehensible forces into new life.

It is probable that *Die Taubenpost* was Schubert's last song and perhaps his last composition. It was written in October of 1828 shortly before his death and was published in 1829 as the last of a set of fourteen songs which the publisher attempted to pass off as a song cycle called *Schwanengesang* (Swan Song). Most of the other songs in this collection are intense, in a new style. *Die Taubenpost* in a sense reverts to a lighter, unpretentious style yet its mastery is undeniable (Fischer-Dieskau calls it “first-class Schubert.”) The poet speaks of a carrier-pigeon in his service who delivers message after message to the beloved. Only at the end of the song do we learn that the carrier pigeon is a symbol of “longing... the messenger of faithfulness.”

Bruce Vogt

# UPCOMING EVENTS

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Saturday, February 28, 2:30 p.m. (Free admission)

## **THANK-YOU CONCERT**

The School of Music says Thank-You to our concert-goers,  
the community, and supporters with a wonderful afternoon of music.  
Phillip T. Young Recital Hall

Saturday, February 28, 8:00 p.m. (Admission by donation)

## **STUDENT COMPOSERS CONCERT**

Featuring original compositions by students in the  
School of Music Composition program.  
Phillip T. Young Recital Hall

Sunday, March 1 (Admission by donation)

## **GUEST MASTERCLASS & CONCERT: Kate Prestia-Schaub, piccolo**

With Martin Kennedy, piano

Flute Masterclass: 3:15–5:30 p.m. | Concert: 5:30–6:30 p.m.

Performing music by Antonio Vivaldi, Francois Couperin, Mike Mower,  
Alessandro Cavicci, Martin Kennedy, and others.

Phillip T. Young Recital Hall

Wednesday, March 4, 8:00 p.m. (Admission by donation)

## **VIOLIN CLASS RECITAL**

Students from the studio of Ann Elliott-Goldschmid.

Phillip T. Young Recital Hall

Thursday, March 5, 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. (Free admission)

## **GUEST LECTURE: *The Speculative Experience of Composing Music***

Toronto-based composer and School of Music alumna, **Linda C. Smith**, presents:  
*The Speculative Experience of Composing Music*

Thursday, March 5, 8:00 p.m. (Admission by donation)

## **SONIC LAB: *Current Exchange Rate of Sixpenny-concepts***

UVic's contemporary music ensemble performs works by Gerald Barry,  
Anton Webern and Karlheinz Stockhausen.

Phillip T. Young Recital Hall

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Tickets available at the UVic Ticket Centre (250-721-8480),  
online ([www.tickets.uvic.ca](http://www.tickets.uvic.ca)) and at the door:

To receive our *On the Pulse* brochure and  
newsletter by email, contact: [concert@uvic.ca](mailto:concert@uvic.ca)



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