



Program Notes for
Pianist Sheng Cai

Please see the links indicated for additional information.

Tchaikovsky: Grand Sonata Opus 37

Moderato e risoluto (G major)

Andante non troppo quasi Moderato (E minor)

Scherzo. Allegro giocoso (G major)

Finale. Allegro vivace (G major)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piano_Sonata_in_G_major_\(Tchaikovsky\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piano_Sonata_in_G_major_(Tchaikovsky))

The Grand Piano Sonata in G major, Op. 37, was written by Russian composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky in 1878. Though initially received with critical acclaim, the sonata has struggled to maintain a solid position in the modern repertoire. Nevertheless, the sonata has been recorded numerous times and is recognized as one of the composer's masterworks.

Structurally, the four movements are connected by the 'Grand Motif' introduced in the first movement, though it is expressed in a variety of contexts.

The first movement is written in common sonata-allegro form, and an array of techniques are used to mimic orchestral colors. The themes presented are undoubtedly Russian, but the composer's strict observance of Western musical tradition is still prevalent.

The second movement is a melancholy Andante which lends itself to Tchaikovsky's natural gift for lyricism. It is considerably longer than the two movements that follow it.

The third movement is a brief, fast-paced Scherzo, and foreshadows some of the techniques later used by Sergei Rachmaninoff and Alexander Scriabin, mainly in its melodic direction.

The fourth and final movement is a galloping Allegro that is very much characteristic of Tchaikovsky's musical style. After sections of difficult passage-work, the sonata closes with an exuberant coda.

Brahms: Intermezzo Op.117 No.1

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Intermezzi_for_piano,_Op._117_\(Brahms\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Intermezzi_for_piano,_Op._117_(Brahms))

The Three Intermezzi for piano, Op. 117, are a set of solo piano pieces composed by Johannes Brahms in 1892. They show Brahms' interest in lullaby; in particular, Brahms told a friend that they were "three lullabies of my grief.

The first intermezzo is among Brahms' most popular piano compositions. It is prefaced in the score by two lines from an anonymous Scottish ballad, "Lady Anne Bothwell's Lament, translated into German:

Schlaf sanft mein Kind, schlaf sanft und schön!
Mich dauert's sehr, dich weinen sehn.

Original:
Baloo, my babe, lie still and sleep;
It grieves me sore to see thee weep.

Andre Mathieu: Printemps Canadien (Canadian Spring)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andr%C3%A9_Mathieu

As a child André Mathieu was unusually precocious, speaking his first words at age four months and taking his first steps before seven months. From an early age Andre was fascinated by the world of music, and received his first music lessons from his father. In 1936, at a mere seven years of age, he performed his Concertino No.1 for Piano and Orchestra as a soloist on the CBC network. He was later given a grant by the Quebec government that enabled him to go to Paris and study piano. As a composer Mathieu's style leaned towards the late Romantic school influenced by Debussy and Rachmaninov. He wrote many works for piano, among them the compositions of his youth: Trois Études (1933), Les Gros Chars (1934), Procession d'éléphants (1934), Trois Pièces pittoresques (1936), Hommage à Mozart enfant (1937), and Les Mouettes(1938), and Printemps Canadien (1940).

Rachmaninoff: Sonata no.2 in B flat minor (original edition, 1913)

Allegro agitato (B-flat minor)

Non allegro—Lento (E minor—E major)

Allegro molto (B-flat major)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piano_Sonata_No._2_\(Rachmaninoff\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piano_Sonata_No._2_(Rachmaninoff))

Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 36, is a piano sonata in B-flat minor composed by Sergei Rachmaninoff in 1913.

The sonata is in three interrelated movements.

It is unified by two *Non allegro* bridges between the movements. The outer movements follow sonata form

First Movement (Allegro agitato)

The first movement of the second piano sonata is in sonata allegro form. The exposition begins with the first theme, which has a descending arpeggio that ends with a low B-flat octave followed by a B-flat minor chord. The first theme area lasts until a cadenza-like passage creates a bridge into the second theme area. The second theme is in D-flat major, with a chorale-like texture that contrasts with the brilliance of the first theme.^[1]

In the development section, which is split into three parts, there is much tonal instability with constantly changing key centers.^[1] Parts of this section use the left hand to imitate bells, with chromatic descending, alternating sevenths and thirds.^[1]

The recapitulation restates the first two themes in B-flat minor. The final section of an extension to the recapitulation alternates between B-flat major and B-flat minor, leaving the tonic unclear until the coda.^[1] The coda, clearly in B-flat minor, repeats two themes seen earlier in the movement.^[1]

Second Movement (Non allegro)

The second movement of the Piano Sonata is in two-part ternary form. A seven-measure interlude in G major links the first and second movements, after which there is a relative minor key area (E minor). The second movement's main theme is based on a motive of a sequentially repeated falling third.

The second movement references material from the first movement, which is the first instance of cyclic unity in the sonata. For example, in the middle-section of this movement, the bell texture from the first movement is re-established.

Third Movement (Allegro molto)

The third movement begins with a repetition of the interlude to the second movement, with the meter shifted from 4/4 to 3/4. This movement, again in sonata-allegro form, further utilizes cyclic unity by using themes from the first movement. The transition to the second theme area of the exposition introduces a new theme (in D major), unusual in sonata-allegro form.

The development section, as in the first movement, is also split into three subsections. Similar to the exposition, it uses themes from the first movement in addition to the new themes introduced in the exposition.

The recapitulation is in B-flat major, and states the first theme from the third movement only once. It utilizes another past theme expansively to lead toward the coda. The coda utilizes themes from the first movement and is highly chromatic and brilliant.