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CHAMBER MUSIC @ BEALL 2015-16



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UNIVERSITY OF
OREGON

School of Music
and Dance

Olga Kern | piano

January 10, 2016 | 3 p.m. | Beall Concert Hall

Piano Sonata in A Major, K. 24
Piano Sonata in D minor, K. 9 Alessandro Scarlatti
 (1660 – 1725)

Piano Sonata No. 21 in C major
Op. 53 “Waldstein” Ludwig van Beethoven
 (1770 – 1827)

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. Introduzione: Adagio molto
- III. Rondo. Allegretto moderato - Prestissimo

Serious Variations Felix Bartholdy Mendelssohn
 (1809 – 1847)

- INTERMISSION -

Homage Variations
to Edward Grieg and Béla Bartók Boris Frenkshteyn
 (b. 1949)

Kinderszenen Robert Schumann
 (1810 – 1856)

Reminiscences of Don Juan Franz Liszt
 (1811 – 1886)

Before the great composer-pianists, there were keyboard virtuosos who distinguished themselves at the harpsichord, including Domenico Scarlatti. His fame rests almost entirely on a collection of 555 harpsichord sonatas that reflect in their expansion of keyboard technique his own abilities, which the Irish composer Thomas Roseingrave likened to “ten thousand devils.” Typically in binary form, with the second half taking harmonic excursions from the first, they display brilliant effects often showing the Iberian influences—such as guitar-like sounds and flamenco rhythms and melancholy—he adopted in the Portuguese and Spanish courts, where he spent most of his career.

The first of the towering pianist-composers of the 19th century, Beethoven was in the midst of a stylistic transformation when in 1803 he began sketching his Op. 53, the “Waldstein” Piano Sonata (the nickname comes from its dedicatee, an important early patron). His encroaching deafness had precipitated a crisis leading to thoughts of suicide the year before, and he emerged from it determined to pursue, as he wrote, “a completely new way of composing.” The first of the piano sonatas to realize it, the piece incorporates driving rhythms, brilliant piano effects, then-unusual harmonic turns and an innovative approach to overall structure.

Also a renowned pianist and one of the defining musical voices of his era, Mendelssohn paid his predecessor tribute in his *Variations Serieuses*, his contribution to an album compiled by the publisher Pietro Mechetti to raise funds for the proposed Beethoven monument in Bonn (other contributors included Chopin and Liszt). Its theme combines chorale-like solemnity with brooding chromaticism and an unpredictable harmonic trajectory; 17 inventive and highly contrasting variations transform it with varying degrees of technical brilliance. The 5th is gentle and syncopated, the 8th turbulent, the 9th contrapuntally imitative. Tension builds toward the thrilling *Allegro vivace* and *Presto*, which ends with a flourish followed by a somber set of chords in conclusion.

The contemporary Russian pianist and composer Boris Frenkshteyn dedicated his *Homage Variations to Edvard Grieg and Béla Bartók* for Olga Kern, who gave its world premiere in November of 2015 at New York’s 92nd St. Y. Comprising two cycles to be played without break, the music is inspired by the two composers’ use of folk music—specifically, Grieg’s *19 Norwegian Folk Tunes* and the pedagogical album *For Children* by Bartók, who admired Grieg’s fresh, straightforward use of source material and adopted some of his motivic development, arrangement techniques, and pairing of songs.

Unlike Bartók’s collection, Schumann’s *Kinderszenen* (“Scenes from Childhood”) was not intended for children but rather as nostalgic reminiscences, though he subtitled the set *Leichte Stücke* (“Easy Pieces”). He wrote to his fiancée Clara Wieck, a pianist for whom he was pining while she was on tour in 1838, “You once said to me that often seemed like a child, and I suddenly got inspired and knocked off around 30 quaint little pieces...you will enjoy them, though you will need to forget that you are a virtuoso when you play them.” He later selected thirteen of these and added evocative titles as suggestions to the performer.

Olga Kern is now recognized as one of her generation's great pianists. With her vivid stage presence, passionately confident musicianship, and extraordinary technique, the striking Russian pianist continues to captivate fans and critics alike. Olga Kern was born into a family of musicians with direct links to Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff and began studying piano at the age of five. She jumpstarted her U.S. career as the first woman in over 30 years to receive the Gold Medal at the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in Fort Worth, Texas.

First prize winner of the Rachmaninoff International Piano Competition at the age of seventeen, Ms. Kern is a laureate of many international competitions and tours throughout Russia, Europe, the United States, Japan, South Africa, and South Korea. Ms. Kern is also a corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Division of the Arts.

In the 2014-2015 season, Olga performs with the NHK Symphony, Orchestre National De Lyon, New Mexico Philharmonic, the symphonies of Detroit (for all three Tchaikovsky Piano Concertos in a festival in the composer's honor), Nashville, Colorado, Madison, Austin, Mobile, and Santa Rosa, and will give recitals in Seattle and Louisville, and alongside star American soprano Renée Fleming in Boston and Washington, DC.

Last season, Olga performed with the Detroit and Cincinnati symphonies, New Mexico Philharmonic, Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo and gave solo recitals in California, New York, San Francisco, and Vancouver. Ms. Kern's performance career has brought her to many of the world's most important venues, including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, Symphony Hall in Osaka, Salzburger Festspielhaus, La Scala in Milan, Tonhalle in Zurich, and the Châtelet in Paris.

Ms. Kern's discography includes Harmonia Mundi recordings of the Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No. 1 with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra and Christopher Seaman (2003), her Grammy Nominated recording of Rachmaninoff's Corelli Variations and other transcriptions (2004), a recital disk with works by Rachmaninoff and Balakirev (2005), Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 1 with the Warsaw Philharmonic and Antoni Wit (2006), Brahms *Variations* (2007) and a 2010 release of Chopin Piano Sonatas No. 2 and 3 (2010). Most recently, SONY released their recording of Ms. Kern performing the Rachmaninoff Sonata for Cello and Piano with cellist Sol Gabetta. She was also featured in the award-winning documentary about the 2001 Cliburn Competition, *Playing on the Edge*, as well as *Olga's Journey, Musical Odyssey in St. Petersburg* and in *They Came to Play*.

Ms. Kern resides in New York City with her son, Vladislav Kern, who studies piano in the Juilliard Pre-College program.

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CONCERT TICKETS reserved seating

Section A \$45 | **Section B** \$38 | **Section C** \$32 | **Section D** \$19

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American Brass Quintet

February 21, 2016 | 3 p.m.

One of the premier brass chamber ensembles of our time will perform a program including works by Gabrieli, Gesualdo, Ewazen, Paterson, and Rieti.



St. Lawrence String Quartet

March 6, 2016 | 3 p.m.

The dynamic ensemble will reveal surprising nuances in the Schumann String Quartet in A Major, Op. 41, No. 3; and will give an in-depth exploration and performance of Haydn's String Quartet in C Major Op. 76, No. 3 ("Emperor").



Collegium Vocale Gent

April 17, 2016 | special 7:30 p.m. start time

One of the world's leading vocal ensembles will perform Orlandus Lassus' *Lagrimae di San Pietro*, conducted by Philippe Herreweghe.



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