

GRADUATION RECITAL

Ian D. Sutherland
piano

Sonata in D Minor, K. 141
Sonata in A Major, K. 39

Domenico Scarlatti
(1685-1757)

Estampes

Pagodes
Soirée dans Grenade
Jardins sous la pluie

Claude Debussy
(1862-1918)

Intermission

Sonata in B-flat Major, D. 960
Molto Moderato
Andante Sostenuto
Scherzo
Allegro ma non Troppo

Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)

Presented in partial fulfilment for the requirements of Music 445B



The leading and most celebrated of Italian keyboard composers of the early eighteenth century was Domenico Scarlatti. The vast majority of his output were his sonatas for keyboard solo, of which there are an estimated 560. These sonatas, so named by the composer, are one movement compositions in binary form where each part is to be repeated. Though the sonatas were originally conceptualised for harpsichord, there is evidence that Scarlatti did play one of Cristofori's new pianos. Scarlatti's Sonata K. 39, in A major, begins with a sweeping downward arpeggio in repeated notes, figuration which is used again in the B section of the typical binary form. Scarlatti provided a dancing theme harmonized, mostly, by thirds. In both A and B sections he uses descending scales in fourths in the treble voice. The Sonata K. 141, in d minor, exploits the repeating capacity of keyboard instruments, emulating the Spanish Flamenco guitar. Of particular note in this sonata is the use of dissonant and ambiguous chords in the left hand. Also, at the end of the A section as well as the B section Scarlatti employs a stepwise progression of parallel dominant seventh chords.

"I am more and more convinced that music, by its very nature, is something that cannot be poured into a tight and traditional form. It is made up of colours and rhythms" — the words of the impressionist composer Claude Debussy. His set of pieces entitled "Estampes" exemplify this attitude, free in form and replete with diverse colour and rhythm. The first of the three pieces, "Pagodes", was inspired by Balinese gamelan music. It features the pentatonic scale with parallel chords of seconds and fourths creating an oriental aesthetic depicting the pagodas of the Far East. The second piece "Soirée dans Grenade" (Evening in Granada) is inspired by Spanish music, especially the habañera rhythm, which runs throughout. The work is in a series of contrasting sections. The last piece in the set, "Jardins sous la pluie" (Gardens in the Rain), is characterised by its rapid broken chord figuration. It introduces two French nursery songs harmonized in truly ingenious ways.

"My peace is gone, my heart is sore, I shall find it never and nevermore'. I may well sing every day now, for each night, on retiring to bed, I hope I may not wake again, and each morning but recalls yesterday's grief." — Franz Schubert.

The Sonata in B flat is a great magisterial epithet to Schubert's corpus of piano sonatas, indeed to his compositional life in totality, as the year of this sonata's composition and the year of his death are the same. The first movement is one of Schubert's longest whose breadth is breathtaking. As is to be expected, the themes in the first movement are truly sublime carried over a constant flow of eighth notes, triplet eighths, and sixteenth notes. This flow is only interrupted at the end of the exposition and recapitulation where quarter notes become predominant. The climax of this movement appears in the d minor build up in the development section. The second movement is meditative, with slow moving harmonies, the theme harmonised in close intervals in the middle of the texture with the left hand sweeping upward across the right at each bar. The middle section of this ternary form places the tune at the top of the texture with accompaniment below it. Left hand pattern changes at the return of A and there is a truly ethereal move from c-sharp minor to C major. The third movement is quite mercurial with airy textures, swinging triple metre and melody hopping around from bass to treble as it scurries from one unlikely key to another. Of particular interest is the trio, in the tonic minor (b-flat minor) with its odd syncopation in the bass. The final movement begins with an octave G, the dominant of c minor, instead of the expected B-flat major. Schubert is playing with our ears and soon enough the tune melts into the expected key. However, the held G octave returns throughout this sonata rondo whenever the opening theme reappears. It only resolves to the dominant of B-flat (F) immediately before the boisterous presto coda.