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# A graduate piano recital

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

A GRADUATE PIANO RECITAL

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF MUSIC

by

Shih-Ying Wu

2003

To: Dean Arthur W. Herriott  
College of Arts and Sciences

This thesis, written by Shih-Ying Wu, and entitled A Graduate Piano Recital, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

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Kemal Gekic

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Jose Lopez

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Miguel Salvador, Major Professor

Date of Defense: May 14, 2003

The thesis of Shih-Ying Wu is approved.

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Dean Arthur W. Herriott  
College of Arts and Sciences

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Dean Douglas Wartzok  
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Florida International University, 2003

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

A GRADUATE PIANO RECITAL

by

Shih-Ying Wu

Florida International University, 2003

Miami, Florida

Professor Miguel Salvador, Major Professor

PROGRAM

The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I.....	Johann Sebastian Bach
	(1685-1750)
Prelude and Fugue XXI in B flat major	
Prelude and Fugue XXII in b flat minor	
Sonata N. 11 in A major, K.331.....	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
	(1756 - 1791)
Theme and Variations	
Menuetto	
Allegretto	

Intermission

Images Series II..... Claude-Achille Debussy

(1862-1918)

Poission d' or (Goldfish)

Rhapsodies Op. 79 .....Johannes Brahms

(1833-1897)

No1 in b minor

No.2 in g minor

Etude in A flat Major, Op. 1, No. 2.....Paul de Schlozer

(1841-1898)

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## Chapter 1 JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

Born in Eisenach, Germany, Johann Sebastian Bach was the most influential member of a dynasty of Bachs, stretching from at least 1550 to 1850. It was a musical family, but Johann Forkel - who wrote the first biography of Bach in 1802 - tells us that even among them, Johann Sebastian stood out as the most instructive, clear and definite teacher there has ever been<sup>1</sup>.

Bach combined the talents of composer, innovator, and organist<sup>2</sup>. His musical ingenuity - he instituted the practice of using thumb and little finger on the keys of the organ - seems to have been endless. However, his extraordinary talents do not seem to have affected the way he lived. He never moved out of the German province of Thuringia-Saxony and his home-life was routine. In his lifetime Bach inspired several good musicians and earned greater respect for his work in his adoptive hometown of Leipzig than anywhere else.

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<sup>1</sup> *The New Bach Reader* (NBR), edited by Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel, revised by Christoph Wolff, NY: W. W. Norton & Co., 1998, 470.

<sup>2</sup> There are many works of Bach's Keyboard music. The well-Tempered Clavier, six French Suites, English Suite, Partitas, Goldberg Variation, etc.

## **Prelude and Fugue in B Flat Minor**

Prelude is composed in four voices. There are three different rhythmical patterns, which enter the music at once at m. 1. Measure 1 is like a small showcase of the whole piece. Within the m. 1, the bass line is composed of eighth notes that are counting the beat as if there is a metronome. The tenor line presents another type of rhythmical pattern (quarter note- eighth note rest- eighth note). This second pattern first appears for two measures long, and then, repeats constantly throughout the piece. The pattern not only can be found in the first two measures of the tenor lines, but also to be found in the other voice lines as well. The soprano line, which contains the third rhythmical pattern, presents the continuous melody line and its musical direction.

In the Fugue in B flat minor, the exposition of the theme in all five voices encompasses seventeen measures. The first episode is ten measures long (one voice omitted). Then in mm.46-54 of the second Episode, all five voices state the subject in the span of nine measures. mm. 55-67, the third episode becomes a hyperstretto.

Fugue in B flat minor is a stretto fugue. Its focus upon stretto is immediately revealed in an extraordinary application of the technique to the exposition itself.

Stretto is normally reserved for middle entries (following the exposition).



The culmination of this fugue is hyperstretto (in mm. 67-71). Everything else exists to build this moment. Stretto involves the subject accompanying itself. This means that a second voice begins the subject before the first voice has finished. The shorter the interval, the closer the stretto is to be hyper. The ultimate hyperstretto involves two voices stating the subject simultaneously. For example, m.55, which contains synchronized statement of the subject and its answer, and m.67 is in the latter segment where the subject is presented in all 5 voices in the span of the incredible eight beats.

### **Prelude and Fugue in B Flat Major**

Prelude in B flat Major contains many broken chords. The rapid tempo makes the music sounding bright and brilliant. Free tempo occurs in the second half of the prelude. For instance, in mm. 11-12, there are thirty-second notes which make the music expressive, and show the line as the bridge to the next chord.

The basic structure of the B flat major fugue is composed with the subject, the 1<sup>st</sup> countersubject and the 2<sup>nd</sup> countersubject. Subject is first presented at mm. 1-4 and then the 1<sup>st</sup> Countersubject enters in m. 5 in the soprano voice. The first entrance of the 2<sup>nd</sup> countersubject is from m. 9, followed after the 1<sup>st</sup> countersubject in the soprano voice.

Bach was able to weave his fugue subjects together, in simultaneous counterpoint, evidence of an excellent design.

In a triple counterpoint, each time the subject complex occurs, its melodies are in different orientation. Sometimes the subject is below its countersubjects, at other times it is above. Sometimes the 1<sup>st</sup> countersubject is above the 2<sup>nd</sup>, at other times it is below. So triple counterpoint allow us to hear Bach's subjects from many perspectives.

This fugue contains 2 types of inversions. First type is the melodic inversion as it appears in mm.1-10. The second type is an inversion of polyphonic texture as in mm. 37-40. Mm. 41-44 is also an example in the mirrored way as mm. 37-40 had. Its texture is the same, albeit in a different mode from mm. 22-25.

## Chapter 2 WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756 - 1791)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in Salzburg, Austria, Jan. 27, 1756, the son of Leopold Mozart and his wife, Anna Maria Pertl. Leopold was a successful composer, violinist and assistant concertmaster at the Salzburg court<sup>3</sup>.

Wolfgang began composing minuets at the age of 5 and symphonies at 9. When he was 6, he and his older sister, Maria Anna, performed a series of concerts to Europe's courts and major cities.

From 1763 to 1766, the Mozart children displayed their talents to audiences in Germany, Paris, at court in Versailles, and London. London is where Wolfgang wrote his first symphonies and began a friendship with Johann Christian Bach, who became a great musical influence on Wolfgang. In Paris, the young Mozart published his first works, four sonatas for clavier with accompanying violin (1764). In 1768, he composed his first opera, *La Finta Semplice*, which had its premiere in Salzburg. In 1769-70, Leopold and Wolfgang undertook a tour through Italy.

This first Italian trip culminated in a new opera, *Mitridate re di Ponto*, composed for Milan. In two further Italian journeys, he wrote two more operas for Milan, *Ascanio in Alba* (1771) and *Lucio Silla* (1772).

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.composers.net/firms.com/mozartbio.html>

When he returned to Salzburg from France, he was given the position of court organist (1779) and produced a splendid series of church works, including the famous Coronation Mass.

Mozart's career in Vienna began promisingly, and he was soon commissioned to write *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (1782). His concerts were a great success, and the emperor, Joseph II, encouraged him, later engaging him as court composer. In 1782, Mozart married Constanze Weber from Germany, much to his father's dismay. Mozart's greatest success was *Le Nozze di Figaro* (*The Marriage of Figaro*) (1786), composed for the Vienna Opera. The great piano concertos and the string quartets dedicated to his friend, Josef Haydn, were also composed during this period.

Mozart's fame began to disappear after *Figaro*. The nobility and court grew increasingly nervous about his revolutionary ideas as seen in *Figaro*. He sank into debt and was assisted by a brother Freemason, Michael Puchberg. His greatest operatic success after *Figaro* was *Don Giovanni* (1787), which was composed for Prague, where Mozart's art was especially appreciated. This was followed in 1790 by *Così fan tutte*, the third and final libretto provided by the Italian poet Lorenzo Da Ponte. In 1791, by *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*), produced by a suburban theater in Vienna.

During this period of financial strain, Mozart composed his last three symphonies (E flat, G minor, and the “Jupiter” in C) in less than 7 weeks at the summer of 1788. These had been preceded by a great series of string quintets, including the two in C and in G minor (1787).

In 1791, Mozart was commissioned to write a requiem, which was unfinished. He was at the time quite ill. He imagined that the work was for himself, which it proved to be. His death, on Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>, 1791, which gave rise to false rumors of poisoning, is thought to have resulted from rheumatic fever, a disease that he had suffered from repeatedly throughout his life. After a cheap funeral at Saint Stephen's Cathedral, he was buried at the cemetery of Saint Marx, a Viennese suburb.

Mozart excelled in every form in which he composed. His contemporaries found the restless ambivalence and complicated emotional content of his music difficult to understand. Accustomed to the light, superficial style of rococo music, his aristocratic audiences could not accept the music's complexity and depth. Yet, with Josef Haydn, Mozart perfected the grand forms of symphony, opera, string quartet, and concerto that marked the classical period in music. In his operas, Mozart's uncanny psychological insight is unique in musical history. His music informed the work of the later Haydn and of the next generation of composers, most notably Beethoven.

The brilliance of his work continued until the end, although darker themes of “poignancy and isolation” grew more marked in his last years, and his compositions continue to exert a particular fascination for musicians and music lovers.

### **Sonata No. 11 in A Major**

The first movement of the A major sonata consists of the theme with 6 variations. The second movement, Menuetto, has the structure of A, B, A (a ternary form). The third movement is in a rondo form. The harmonic pattern of the theme in the first movement is very symmetrical. The theme of the first movement is divided in 2 big sections. Other than Variation III, which is composed in a minor, the rest of the variations are based on the similar type of chord progression and the same major key. The whole sonata is well structured. Comparing the first movement with other movements in this sonata, music elements from the first movement frequently reappear in the second and third movements. In the second movement, mm. 49-64 and the similar passages within the same section, Mozart adopted a similar music element and pattern from the variation IV from the first movement. The ornamentation in variation VI is again being used in the third movement as well.

### Chapter 3 CLAUDE-ACHILLE DEBUSSY (1862-1918)

Claude-Achille Debussy was the founder and the most important representative of the French Impressionism in music. His composing style had served as inspiration for many later composers, and its influence survived to this day<sup>4</sup>.

Claude Debussy was born in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, August 22, 1862. He had his first piano lesson at the age of 9. In 1873, Debussy entered the Paris Conservatory, where he studied piano with Antoine Francois Marmontel and composition with Ernest Guiraud. His cantata *L'enfant prodigue* won the Prix de Rome in 1884.

From 1887 on, Debussy focussed his activity on composition. He enjoyed the company of the leading impressionist poets and painters who gathered at the home of the poet Stephane Mallarme. Through influences and inspiration of the different aspects of their arts, Debussy's work had established the style of impressionistic music. At that time, Debussy initiated his most productive period, which lasted nearly 20 years. Most of his piano music, including the two books of Preludes were composed from 1910 to 1913, the incidental music to *The Martyrdom of St. Sebastian* (1911) and the ballet *Jeux* (1912).

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<sup>4</sup> <http://web02.hnh.com/composer/btm.asp?fullname=Debussy,%20Claude>

In 1899, Debussy married Rosalie Texier, a dressmaker. He left her in 1904 for Emma Bardac, wife of a Parisian banker. He married Bardac in 1908. They had one daughter, Claude-Emma, the "Chouchou" to whom the Children's Corner suite (1906-08) was dedicated. About 1910, Debussy developed cancer, which weakened his strength during his last years. His sadness during World War I contributed to further deterioration of his health. Many projects were planned, such as an opera based on Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher," but only a few were completed. He died during the bombardment of Paris by German artillery. Debussy's style was one of the most important influences on 20th-century music.

### **Goldfish**

The challenge of the piece is to present a colorful sounds on the piano by using different touch, as well as a varied pedal use. Debussy's meticulous articulation signs have already been mentioned. Legato and phrasing expression must always be exactly observed, as well as the signs for the interpretation - for example "En s'apaisant" (growing calmer) and the "la bass un peu en dehors" (bring out the bass line a little). Staccato dots represent a clear but not heavy sound, full of the musical color. The French terms "Cédez" (slacken tempo) and "Serrez" (speed up tempo) correspond with ritardando/rallentando, or with accelerando respectively.



Rubato playing and even the tiniest alterations in tempo are only permitted where they are specifically marked. By performing Debussy's piano music, one needs to play with suppleness and a gentle rhythmic flexibility.

Claude Debussy was a great harmonic innovator of the Twentieth Century. He created fresh, new tonal perspectives without abandoning tonality itself. Goldfish is one of the most typical compositions of its kind. As with the painters, Impressionist composers did not seek to express a feeling or tell a story, but to evoke a mood or an atmosphere. In Goldfish, the score was not written with a detail description about a story of a goldfish or anything else, but just for building up the mood and sound of the picture of listeners and performer's own imagination. The emphasis of Debussy's expression was given to color, shadings, and textures instead of clarity of design. The Impressionists wanted to escape the major-minor modes of the past. To do this there must be an avoidance of half-step intervals that define major and minor tonalities. Debussy frequently built on pentatonic, modal, and whole-tone scales and chords. Augmented triads, a natural result of whole-tone scales, and unresolved seventh and ninth chords were frequent. These were harmonies of exceeding richness offering a depth of glowing color. In addition, the sustained pedal effects and the carryover of non-chord tones created a sonorous haze against which succeeding harmonies unfold.

In the composition of his songs, especially, his innovations were based on subtle inflections of French language and poetry, particularly its non-metrical and non-symmetrical feel, resulting in the antithesis of the Romantic art song.

Impressionism released the chord from its function in regard to the movement and goal of the music. Chords could be freely altered. Chords no longer required preparation or resolution in conventional harmonic patterns<sup>5</sup>. For example in mm. 64-72, the whole passage was for reaching a higher and brighter sound of a new motion. Harmonic patterns were free to move in nontraditional manners. This blurring of traditional tonal progressions may be analogous to the Impressionist painters' technique of avoiding hard edges and sudden, sharp contrasts.

Impressionism created what was virtually a new musical language, free of superimposed formal constraints and deterministic tonal harmony. Parallel chordal movement (up or down) sometimes included chords of the same quality (i.e. all major, or minor) for example, in mm. 48-50. Many times a primary interval (octave, fourth, or fifth) was added in parallel fashion to a melody. Impressionist composers juxtaposed pure chordal colors, leaving it to the ear of the listener to interpret the whole. Melodies were frequently elusive. Repeated melodic fragments were common (E.g. mm. 10-13 and mm. 14-17).

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<sup>5</sup> Debussy, Zoltan Kocsis, Philips Classics Production, NY, 1990.

The composer's own words offer the best explanation of his art. "There is no theory. You have only to listen. Pleasure is the law. I love music passionately. And because I love it, I try to free it from barren traditions that stifle it. It is a free art gushing forth, an open-air art boundless as the elements, the wind, the sky, the sea. It must never be shut in and become an academic art."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> <http://web02.hnh.com/composer/btm.asp?fullname=Debussy,%20Claude>

## Chapter 4 JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

Brahms began studying the piano at the age of seven and later studied theory and composition with Eduard Marxsen from the age of thirteen. After a couple of years of theoretical studies, Marxsen was so impressed that he suggested they send off a parcel of Brahms' compositions to the great Robert Schumann for his opinion. It was returned unopened. But five years later, after Schumann met and heard Brahms play some of his own piano works, he changed his mind considerably.

In his twenties, Brahms played a wide range of repertoire- his own works and pieces of other composers. When he arrived in Vienna in the 1860s, he made his mark first as a pianist. He maintained a close relationship with the piano throughout his life. He held a life-long interest and fascination with piano technique. Most of Brahms' great works for orchestra first saw the light of day at the keyboard. Today, his piano music is regarded just as highly as that of great 19-century piano virtuosos such as Liszt and Chopin. In 1891-1894 Brahms wrote some of his best instrumental pieces, inspired by the clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld. Soon after Clara Schumann's death in 1896, he died from cancer, aged 63, and was buried in Vienna<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Piano Music of Brahms Volume 2, CBC Records, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1997

Roughly speaking, the solo piano music of Brahms can be grouped into three categories. The three piano sonatas, the only ones he would write were all completed before he was twenty. Many of his composition at the time were with shorter and lyrical pieces, an interest that would further ripen later in his life.

The second category is comprised of several sets of Variations, again linking him to earlier keyboard masters. The group culminates in the great works based on the theme by Handel, Op. 24, and the great Paganini theme, Op. 35. It also shows Brahms' great love and fascination for piano technique.

Then from 1872 onward, his solo piano output concentrated on collections of Ballades, Capriccios, Intermezzi and Rhapsodies. These shorter lyrical pieces show a new interest in textures and moods. They are perfect example of Brahms' later, more intimate style, where fewer notes represent richer substance and deeper motions. And, interestingly, they go against the "bigger is better" philosophy, that was embraced by almost every other composer of piano music at the time.

Fundamentally reserved, logical and studious, Brahms was particularly interested of taut forms in his music, though he used genre distinctions loosely. In the piano music, for example, which chronologically encircles his vocal output, the dividing lines between ballade and rhapsody, and capriccio and intermezzo, are vague, such terms refer more to expressive character than to musical form.

As in other media, his most important development in piano music is the variation form, whether used independently (simple melodic alteration and thematic cross-reference) or to create a large integrated cycle in which successive variations contain their own thematic transformation such as in the Handel Variations.

### **Rhapsodies Op. 79.**

Brahms originally wanted to call one of them a Capriccio, but he eventually settled on Rhapsodies<sup>8</sup>. They are longer, more passionate, and cover a wider range of mood than the earlier Capriccios and Intermezzi. “I must say that the title themselves baffle me; there is nothing “rhapsodic” about them- either in the music itself, or in the rather obvious sonata form of the second one in G minor. This makes me wonder how much thought, if any, Brahms actually gave to titling these pieces, and had to reconcile himself to the fact that he had to call them something<sup>9</sup>. The G minor Rhapsody is a type of concise, one -movement sonata, complete with development section. Op.79, No.1 in F minor, is in the structure of A, B, A’, C, A, B, A’, Coda.

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<sup>8</sup> The Grove Concise Dictionary of Music, edited by Stanley Sadie, Macmillan Press Ltd., London

<sup>9</sup> Piano music of Johannes Brahms, Dorian Group, Ltd., NY, 1992

## Chapter 5 PAUL DE SCHLOZER (1841-1898)

Jorge Bolet told to Bryce Morrison that “the A flat Etude has long been a favorite Bolet encore or lollipop. It was also used by no less a pianist than Rachmaninov as a finger-twisting start to his daily practice routine.”<sup>10</sup>

It is in the Grand Romantic style. Intricate chromatic passagework and widespread chords are heard in this piece. The chromatic passage and the chord progression (containing a melody line) are presented simultaneously.

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<sup>10</sup> Jorge Bolet Encores, The Decca Record Company Limited, Londo, 1987.

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