

63rd Concert Series 2016-2017



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is pleased to present

**Lise de la Salle,  
piano**

Saturday, April 22, 2017

Sleepy Hollow High School, Sleepy Hollow, New York



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## **Acknowledgments**

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*\*as of February 20, 2017*

# Program

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**Transcriptions of**  
**Schumann: Liebeslied, “Widmung” (Op. 25, No. 11, S.566** Franz Liszt  
**Schubert: Ständchen (after Schubert D.957), S. 560/7 (LW A49/7) (1811-1886)**  
**Schumann: Frühlingsnacht (Op. 38, No. 12), S568**

**Fantasie in C Major, Op. 17** Robert Schumann  
*Durchaus Fantastisch und Leidenschaftlich Vorzutragen – (1810-1856)*  
*Im Legenden – Ton*  
*Mäfsig. Durchaus Energisch – Etwas Langsamer – Vielbewegter*  
*Langsam getragen. Durchweg leise zu halten, Etwas bewegter*

## Intermission

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**Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet for Piano, Op. 75** Sergei Prokofiev  
*National Dance (1891-1953)*  
*Scene*  
*Menuet*  
*The Young Juliet*  
*Masks*  
*The Montagues and Capulets*  
*Friar Laurence*  
*Mercutio*  
*Dance of the Girls with the Lilies*  
*Romeo and Juliet before Separation*

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She records for Naïve, [www.naive.fr](http://www.naive.fr)

Piano by Steinway

## Next Concert

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Saturday, May 6, 2017, 8:00 pm at Sleepy Hollow High School, Sleepy Hollow, New York  
**The Dover Quartet**  
Program: Beethoven: String Quartet in F minor, Opus 95 (“Serioso”); Britten: Quartet No. 2 in C Major, Opus 36; Shostakovich: Quartet No. 2 in A Major, Op. 68.

# Program notes

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## Schumann and Schubert Songs

Transcribed for piano by Franz Liszt

Franz Liszt secured his position in musical history with his unmatched piano virtuosity, his championship of his contemporaries such as Berlioz and Wagner, and especially his “modernization” of music. He created a new style of piano playing, invented the symphonic poem, helped to establish a place for folklore in art-music, and reconstructed the symphony, the sonata, and the concerto. His new ideas profoundly influenced several generations of composers and performers. For many years, his fame rested on his reputation as the world’s greatest pianist, but by the 1840’s this accomplishment no longer sufficed for him. He desired to refine, discipline and redirect his creative powers, to create music that expressed new ideas free of the limitations in form and expression that he and his contemporaries had inherited from the classic masters.

In an age whose only means of transmitting and preserving musical information came either from print or performance, Franz Liszt enlarged the musical experience of his audiences by transcribing for piano many works originally conceived for other vehicles of performance: symphonies, opera excerpts, and, as here, songs. In 1838, Liszt rediscovered Schubert when he returned to Vienna (Schubert’s city) to give charity concerts for the victims of the flooding of the Danube that had inundated the city after an unusually severe winter. Liszt played his first piano versions of Schubert’s music, relatively literal translations from the medium of song, for those charity concerts. The songs immediately were published, and sold so quickly that his publisher enthusiastically commissioned more. Within eight years Liszt had produced 56 Schubert song transcriptions. Because they were omitted from a 1901 edition of Liszt’s collected music, they remained out of the repertory; however, since the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, young pianists have rediscovered and performed them.

Liszt’s piano versions of songs simultaneously championed the music of both Schubert and Schumann and widened Liszt’s own repertory. They also advanced piano technique, as Liszt confronted special problems of spacing and timbre that had not been addressed before. Each one posed the technical problem of how to create a self-contained piano work with no distortion of the original song. Since some of the accompaniments of songs already demanded virtuoso technique, reproducing the vocal line in the transcription became an extremely difficult task. The transcriptions do not proclaim their difficulty audibly to the audience, yet they demand total command of fingering, phrasing, and pedal from the artist. Around the time they were written, Schumann himself remarked: “It is said that when performed by Liszt they are highly effective, and only a master’s hands may attempt to perform them, for they are some of the most difficult piano pieces ever written...”

Liszt had the Schubert song lyrics published interlacing his piano transcriptions; he focused on the verbal imagery in particular, as an examination of his 1838 transcription of “*Ständchen*” from *Schwanengelang*, D.957, which Schubert composed in 1826, shows. As the music historian Alan Watts pointed out, in this lover’s serenade Liszt presents the melody of the first verse as if it were scored for a soprano, and the second as if a baritone were singing it, finally bringing the two lovers together in a canon.

In 1840, when Schumann married Clara Wieck, he wrote many songs, almost half of his total production of lieder. Among them was “*Liebeslied: “Widmung,”*” a love song he wrote as his wedding present to Clara. In it his passion and devotion are expressed.

Liszt first transcribed it soon after that, but in 1848 published another, more elaborate one, with sweeping passages for the piano in which he added a postlude to the first section; an 1849 addition is marked "*Innig Lebhaft*" (intimately agile).

"*Frühlingsnacht*" ("*Spring Night*") from *12 Lieder*, Op. 39, was one of Schumann's more cheerful songs, describing his excitement on uniting with Clara Wieck after the long battle with her father. Inclusion of the words of birds' migrations and the flowers of spring symbolize his love being returned to him again. Liszt's transcription of "*Frühlingsnacht*" retains much of Schumann's original accompaniment; however, to intensify the effect, Liszt added trills, tremolos, and arpeggios to give a sense of the feverish agitation of the original song.

## **Fantasia in C Major, Op. 17**

Robert Schumann

Although he began his musical training as a young child, Robert Schumann later studied law, then returned to music. After permanently injuring his hand, he abandoned his hopes for a career as a pianist and earned his living as a composer and conductor as well as editing an important musical journal that he founded in 1844. In 1840, he married Clara Wieck, the daughter of his piano teacher; she herself was one of the renowned pianists of her era, and one of the first women to receive prominent recognition as a composer.

The monumental **Fantasia in C Major** is the most famous of Robert Schumann's piano compositions. "To understand the Fantasy," he wrote to Clara, "think back to the summer of 1836, when I was separated from you." But the background of this Fantasy actually is more complicated, for it involves many ideas and people close to the Schumanns, and it had a multi-layered presence in their musical and emotional as well as their public and private lives.

At that time, musical Europe was erecting a monument to Beethoven in Bonn, Beethoven's birthplace. Franz Liszt was one of the most active musicians in this important step toward the near-deification of Beethoven; Schumann intended to participate by contributing his earnings from the sale of the Fantasy as his "penny-worth for Beethoven," he said. Schumann dedicated the Fantasy to Liszt, whom he greatly admired and who was then his friend.

The Fantasy is a freely-shaped sonata. It also is a confidential communication from Robert to Clara that escaped notice until 1920, when a German scholar noted that, embedded in the "most passionate" first movement is a musical quotation from a Beethoven song cycle, a fragment of melody that is sung to the words, "So take these songs that I have sung for you, beloved."

The music is characterized by its sweeping power, its sustained lyricism, and its forceful contrasts. The first movement starts almost abruptly, as though a door has been opened on a discourse already in progress. It is a work of "fantasy and passion throughout," say the instructions Schumann provided for the player, although the music shifts for a while to a style that is "legendary in tone," by which Schumann presumably meant that it is like a ballad.

The second movement, which follows without pause, is to be played at a moderate tempo, but energetically or vigorously. It is a great march in which powerful chords alternate with complex counterpoint. When Clara was learning it, she said it made her "hot and cold all over," and added, "If only I could hear it played by a great orchestra!" The Fantasy ends with a long, gentle poetic reverie.

## Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet for Piano, Op. 75

Sergei Prokofiev

Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet became the inspiration for works by composers as diverse as Mendelssohn, Schumann, Liszt, Verdi, Strauss, Berlioz, Bellini, Gounod, Tchaikovsky, Delius, and Bernstein. The first ballet based on the story was performed in 1811, in Copenhagen. In 1934, the managers of the Leningrad Opera and Ballet theater proposed that Prokofiev write a ballet for them, too; the Bolshoi Ballet in Moscow expressed interest as well. The project caught fire in the composer's imagination.

In the spring of 1935 Prokofiev worked on the scenario with the ballet company directors and, by the end of May, he was showing other composers sketches for the music. The whole work was so clear in his mind, so meticulously planned out, that he was able to write the complete score for this full-evening-length ballet between July 1 and September 8, 1935, while also composing his Violin Concerto No. 2 and a number of other works.

The Bolshoi considered the score that October, but made no plans for a stage production in Russia; consequently the first performance of the ballet was in Brno, Czechoslovakia, in 1938. When he understood that it would not be staged in his homeland, Prokofiev used much of the music in two suites for orchestra, and also created a set of ten piano pieces based on the score. He altered the excerpts to make them more suitable for concert use so that each became a perfect miniature. The early popularity of the suites finally led to the first Russian production of Romeo and Juliet by the Kirov Ballet of Leningrad in 1940.

The ten-movement powerful, virtuosic piano music chronicles the beginning of the love between Romeo and Juliet, with some additional character and ensemble dances. Prokofiev selected what he felt were the parts best suited for transcription, picking those "for which the original was playable on piano and not much, if anything needed to be removed;" thus the music of the **Ten Pieces** is virtually identical to that of the original ballet score. Nine of the ten are "taken directly from the ballet without alteration." The significant changes are only in the original order in which the various scenes appeared.

*National Dance* is a tarantella, a folk dance whose texture is closer to that of a gigue. *Scene*, is subtitled "The Street Awakens", with stragglers returning home. In *Minuet*, guests arrive at the Capulets' ball; the dance is more akin to an 18<sup>th</sup> century polonaise, with its processional function. In *The Young Juliet*, playful music depicts Juliet entering with her nursemaid, then finally realizing that she now is a young woman. *Masks* connotes the arrival at the Capulets' party of Romeo and other Montagues in disguise. *The Montagues and Capulets* is a ponderous dance for the knights, with an initial martial tone; when Romeo spies Juliet and pursues her, it turns the mood of the suite, for Romeo and Juliet now are in love. The calm tone in *Friar Lawrence* signifies advice Romeo receives concerning his romantic dilemma, but it is succeeded by the joking tones of *Mercutio*, the following piece. *Dance of the Girls with Lilies* introduces Paris, Juliet's approved intended. *Romeo and Juliet Separating* includes a *Pas de deux* of the lovers' farewell and Juliet's drinking the poison; it is a transcription of a movement of the same name in the *Orchestral Suite No. 2*.

Overall, the succession of tempi and characters gives the listener a highly satisfactory experience. The set exhibits a balance, as the first and last selections are the longest in the grouping. **Ten Pieces**, Op. 75, was published in 1938.

--- Notes provided by Susan Halpern.

# About the Artist

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Born in Cherbourg, France in 1988, Lise de la Salle began studying the piano at the age of four and gave her first concert at nine in a live broadcast on Radio-France. When she was eleven, she received special permission to enter the Paris Conservatoire Supérieur de Musique to study with Pierre Réach. At 18 she made her concerto debut with Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 2 in Avignon and her Paris recital debut at the Louvre before going on tour with the Orchestre National d'Île de France playing Haydn's Concerto in D Major. She graduated in 2001.

Ms. de la Salle first came to international attention in 2005, at the age of 16, with a Bach/Liszt recording that was selected as "Recording of the Month" by *Gramophone Magazine*. Many of her subsequent recordings on the Naïve label have been similarly recognized. She has played with many of the world's leading orchestras and conductors, including those in London, Paris, Munich, Tokyo, Baltimore, Detroit, and Quebec, and is a sought-after recitalist and chamber player throughout the world.

Ms. de la Salle began the 2016-17 season performing recitals and chamber music at the Verbier Festival in Switzerland. In addition to this second appearance with Friends of Music Concerts, her schedule will have taken her to perform with leading symphonic ensembles in Paris, Germany, and the United States, with additional recitals and chamber performances in, among others, Fresno, Detroit, and Washington, DC, where, in January, she received high praise for her recital at the Phillips Collection. *The Washington Post's* Stephen Brookes opined that she has developed into a "musical thinker of impressive weight, with charm, imagination, and a dazzling technique," and particularly praised her "psychologically astute, often mesmerizing reading" of Prokofiev's **Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet**, Op. 75, which we will hear tonight.

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