

62nd Concert Series 2015-2016



FRIENDS *of* MUSIC

is pleased to present

**Yun-Chin Zhou,**  
**piano**

Saturday, April 30, 2016

Sleepy Hollow High School, Sleepy Hollow, New York



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\* as of March 25, 2016

# Program

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## **Two Sonatas**

*K. 9 in D minor*  
*K. 380 in E Major*

Domenico Scarlatti  
(1685-1757)

## **Liebested** from *Tristan und Isolde*

*after Richard Wagner;*  
transcribed by Franz Liszt  
(1811-1886)

## **Preludes, Op. 23**

*No. 1 in F-sharp minor*  
*No. 2 in B-flat Major*  
*No. 4 in D Major*  
*No. 6 in E-flat Major*  
*No. 10 in G-flat Major*

Sergei Rachmaninoff  
(1873-1943)

## Intermission

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## **Sonata No. 8 in B-flat Major, Op. 84**

*Andante dolce – Allegro moderato – Andante dolce*  
*Andante sognando*  
*Vivace – Allegro ben mercato – Andantino - Vivace*

Sergei Prokofiev  
(1891-1953)

Yun-Chin Zhou appears by arrangement with Young Concert Artists, 250 West 57th Street, Suite 1222, New York, NY 10107. [www.yca.org](http://www.yca.org).

## Next Concert

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Saturday, May 14, 2016, 8:00 pm at Sleepy Hollow High School, Sleepy Hollow, New York

### **Pacifica Quartet**

Program: String Quartet in G Major, K.387, by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart; String Quartet No. 3 by Alfred Schnittke; and String Quartet in E minor, Op. 44, No. 2, by Felix Mendelssohn.

# Program notes

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## Two Sonatas for Keyboard

Domenico Scarlatti

Scarlatti was the founder of modern keyboard technique and one of the greatest keyboard virtuosos of his time. In his youth he lived in Naples and Rome, but in 1719 he resigned from his post as director of the Papal Choir at the Vatican to become the staff musician of a young Portuguese princess who, ten years later, married the heir to the Spanish throne. From 1729 until his death Scarlatti lived and worked in Madrid as a member of the Spanish royal household. Most of the music he composed he wrote expressly for her pleasure, and much of it is full of the echoes and dances of the Spanish people.

Although he composed some operas and sacred music, we know and remember Domenico Scarlatti for his more than five hundred sonatas for the harpsichord, unique in their originality. Most were written quickly and in the last five years of his life. Their invention and vitality are quite remarkable. They all are brief, but they are sophisticated and charming.

For Scarlatti, the name “sonata” meant little more than music that was to be played rather than sung. All of his sonatas are in binary form: a single movement divided into two sections, each of which is repeated. Scarlatti used many difficult and daring devices such as rapidly repeated notes, skips, trills, and intricate hand-crossings. In most of his sonatas, Scarlatti creates a feeling of the natural-length breath with a dance phrase. Most often, the dance phrase dominates the *Allegros*. Sometimes a feeling of a “panting” rhythm created by fragmentary repeated phrases tells us where the breath would come if the music were sung.

Tonight’s concert includes two Scarlatti sonatas, which are identified by their numbers in Ralph Kirkpatrick’s chronological catalog.

Published in London in 1738, K. 9, **Sonata in D minor**, *Allegro moderato*, may have been written as much as 20 years before then. A light, melodic work, it is occasionally playful and projects a bucolic charm as well as a pervasive quality of serenity. It has a fanfare-like beginning, followed by a repeated note figure. In its second half Scarlatti develops the expository material of the first half. The sonata is known for the variety of its themes and the orchestral nature of the writing.

K. 380, **Sonata in E Major**, *Andante commodo*, one of the composer’s last sonatas, includes extravagant leaps, occasional hand-crossing, and the full range of keyboard figuration. One of the most famous and most frequently played of Scarlatti’s works, it has the feeling of a processional.

**Liebostod** from *Tristan und Isolde*, transcription for piano S.447

Richard Wagner/Franz Liszt

In Liszt’s touring days as a pianist, dressed-up versions of favorite melodies from successful, then-current operas were among the most admired works on his concert programs. The earliest ones were simply medleys of popular melodies (then the equivalent of today’s Broadway show tunes) that Liszt wanted to add to his concert repertoire. He presented them in brilliantly virtuosic settings of the type that, at that time, only he could play.

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In later years, Liszt's piano versions of operatic music metamorphosed into a new form. Although he based them on melodies borrowed from the great new operas, his extraordinary creativity enabled him to turn them into something new; they became more like original compositions for piano.

**Liebestod** is a transcription of one of the most dramatic and often-excerpted moments from Wagner's opera *Tristan and Isolde*. It appears at the end of the opera when Isolde grieves over the body of her great love, Tristan. She sings, "How softly and gently he smiles, how sweetly his eyes open...."

Liszt's transcription is reasonably faithful to Wagner's score. Although the work starts off with a gloomy feel, it soon contains the yearning with which Wagner infused his orchestral sound. The music builds as the emotions build with the passion of the theme of love. The piano brings forth the ecstasy, tragedy, and beauty of the original before the music fades, as it depicts Isolde falling onto Tristan's body.

### **From Preludes, Op. 23**

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Rachmaninoff used Tchaikovsky as both model and inspiration for his music's melodic power and rich, characteristic Russian sound, but European music also is an evident influence, especially in these preludes, composed in 1903 as part of a set of ten. Just prior to the Preludes, Op. 23, Rachmaninoff composed Variations on a Theme of Chopin, Op. 22, a conscious tribute to that master composer. His ten preludes fit the mold Chopin established for the prelude – a composition expressing a distinct mood or emotion – yet they also have a kinship to Chopin's etudes. Rachmaninoff's preludes have a distinct theatricality; with him the preludes become miniature dramas.

Rachmaninoff never performed his preludes as a complete cycle, preferring instead to present contrasting selections, as is being done by Yun-Chin Zhou tonight. **No. 1, in F-sharp minor, Largo**, has a quiet, introspective, Chopinesque character, sustaining a slow and melancholy melody over an undulating accompaniment.

**No. 2 in B-flat Major, Maestoso**, is dramatic, even flamboyant in character, virtuosic and tumultuous, a great, sweeping, powerful composition. Rachmaninoff's contemporaries acclaimed this brilliant, expansive prelude and "saw originality in Rachmaninoff's bell-like rhythmic sound colors, their opulence and festiveness."

**No. 4 in D Major, Andante cantabile**, a lyrical, Chopinesque meditation with a glorious extended melody over sweeping arpeggios, is reminiscent of the popular themes in Rachmaninoff's piano concertos. (He had written Piano Concerto No. 2 a little more than two years before.)

**No. 6 in E-flat Major** is lyrical and nostalgic. It resembles a nocturne, with the melody in octaves over an expressive sixteenth-note accompaniment.

**No. 10 in G-flat Major** is the last prelude in the set, the shortest and simplest. It has the character of a stately elegy. Very melodic and subtle, it does not have a climactic passage, a distinctive feature that by this point had become almost an expected "signature" of Rachmaninoff's style.

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## Sonata for Piano No. 8 in B-flat Major, Op. 84

Sergei Prokofiev

In 1939 Prokofiev returned to solo instrumental music after a long hiatus in which he wrote mostly theater and program music. He planned a cycle of three large piano sonatas, his 6th, 7th, and 8th, and before completing them gave them opus numbers 82, 83, and 84. He sketched themes and some development passages, working on the sonatas almost simultaneously as if they were a single huge work, and assigned the movements to specific sonatas only later. Prokofiev finished Sonata No. 6 in 1940, and in 1941, when he and many other artists were evacuated from Moscow for safety from the invading German army, he took the sketches of the other two with him. He completed Sonata No. 7 in 1942, and No. 8 in 1944. The “war-time sonatas,” as he called them, display the melodic richness of his late theater works, the operas *War and Peace* and *Semyon Kotko*, as well as the brilliance of his own performances at the piano. Each also is memorable for its suggestion of turbulence and tension. About this sonata and the other two in the trilogy, Sviatoslav Richter has commented, “[They throw] one into the anxious situation of the world losing its equilibrium...[but eventually] the impetuous, advancing race, full of the will for victory, sweeps away everything in its path.”

Prokofiev dedicated **Sonata No. 8** to Mira, his companion from after his marriage’s dissolution until his death. It was premiered December 30, 1944 in the Great Hall of Moscow Conservatory by the then young pianist Emil Gilels.

The huge and profound first movement of **Sonata No. 8**, *Andante dolce – Allegro moderato – Andante dolce*, is the longest movement in any of the Prokofiev sonatas, full of rhythmic and melodic conflict as well as texture. It starts with a long exposition in which tender and tranquil subjects flow into sad and mournful ones. The first theme is lyrical and melancholic with a sense of suppressed suffering, and the second has a real sense of desolation. A stormy, clangorous development follows, whereupon the opening material returns; the movement concludes with a quick coda.

Next comes a slow dance, *Andante sognando*, short and elegant, sometimes even playful, a not uncomplicated interlude between the two big, passionate, powerful movements. The movement originated as incidental music that Prokofiev composed for his abandoned orchestral score to *Eugene Onegin*. Here it is like a mazurka, but otherworldly. The bass is regular at the beginning although the harmony is subtly awry, but soon the bass, too, becomes off balance. Later, melody and accompaniment do not seem to belong together, and then a contrasting section follows one of several harmonic shifts. The opening theme returns with a strange accompaniment as the melody dissolves.

The very difficult finale, *Vivace – Allegro ben mercato – Andantino – Vivace*, begins with a persistent, driving rhythmic figure resembling a tarantella. The music becomes agitated, heroic, and sharply accented, building to a powerful climax and then fading into reminders of the opening section. A brilliant coda brings the sonata to a close.

— Notes provided by Susan Halpern

# About the Artist

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A native of Shenyang, China, Yun-Chin Zhou is the sixth artist to receive the Friends of Music Concerts Performance Award that is presented to a winner of the Young Concerts Artists International Auditions in New York City. In 2013, the year he was a YCA winner, he also won first prize in the Gina Bachauer Piano Competition at Juilliard, which brought him a full scholarship and an appearance on WQXR's Young Artist Showcase with Robert Sherman. His YCA win also enabled his debut recitals in New York City and Washington, DC.

In addition to this recital for Friends of Music Concerts, Yun-Chin Zhou's 2015-16 season includes recitals at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, the Morgan Library and Museum in New York City, and Colgate University. He will perform with violinist Paul Huang (also an FOM Performance Award winner) in the Chamber Music Society of Maryland's Music in the Great Hall Series. In addition, he will appear as soloist with the Fort Smith Symphony and in Alice Tully Hall with the Orchestra of St. Luke's conducted by Michael Stern at the Young Concert Artist Gala Concert.

Mr. Zhou won top prizes in the 2007 China International Piano Competition, the 2006 Gulangyu Piano Competition in Xiamen, the Busoni Piano Competition in Italy, and the Cleveland Piano Competition. He has appeared as soloist with orchestras throughout China, including the China National Symphony Orchestra in Beijing.

Mr. Zhou began his piano studies at the age of seven. From the age of 19 he studied at the Curtis Institute of Music with Gary Graffman and Robert McDonald, with whom he continues his studies at the Juilliard School.



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