ARIEL LANYI, piano
Winner, 2021 Concert Artists Guild Competition

Program I: Anguish, Humor, and Eternity

Beethoven: Sonata No. 23 in F minor, Op. 57 “Appassionata”
Alissa Firsova: Lune rouge and The Endless Corridor
Intermission
Beethoven: Sonata No. 30 in E major, Op. 109
Franck: Prelude, Aria, et Final

This program signifies for me the emotional boundlessness of the musical experience. Beethoven’s “Appassionata” is perhaps one of the composer’s most dire and turbulent works. In the passionate key of F minor, Beethoven struggles between the unstoppable forces of anguish and hope. Somewhat uncharacteristically for him, the work ends in an apocalyptic flurry of terror. Alissa Firsova’s Lune rouge and The Endless Corridor create a truly unique sense of sonic mirage, through creative use of multi-layered texture and rhythm. Her use of those textures evokes at times various rhapsodic piano works of the past. Both Beethoven’s sonata Op. 109 and Franck’s Prelude, aria, et final invoke notions of the elemental and the infinite. While listening to them, we cannot escape the sense of timelessness, brought about by the cyclical nature of both works. Beethoven returns at the end of the sonata to the intimate place where he started it, and the Prelude, aria, et final is thematically wired in a way that allows for all elements of the piece to organically come together in a rousing climax, to then just fade away back into the tender atmosphere of the work’s beginning.
Program II: Dances, Rhapsodies, and Beyond

Haydn: Sonata in E-flat major, Hob. XVI:49
Mendelssohn: Fantasy in F-sharp minor, Op. 28 “Scottish Sonata"
Albéniz: Iberia, Book IV
Intermission
Schumann: Symphonic Studies, Op. 13

This program highlights works based on dance rhythms and rhapsodic elements. Haydn’s E-flat major sonata, Hob.XVI:49, is propelled by the rhythm of the minuet, which, in Haydn’s uniquely original hands, undergoes countless transformations. The final volume of Iberia, the valedictory masterpiece of the late-Romantic Spanish composer Isaac Albéniz, consists of reminiscences of Spain characterized by unmistakable dance rhythms. Despite it being written at the turn of the last century, we hear a sense of elegance not uncharacteristic of the classicism of Haydn, heard in the E-flat major sonata. Mendelssohn’s Fantasy in F-sharp minor, known as the “Scottish Sonata,” and Schumann’s Symphonic Studies, both challenge the conventions of known musical forms, and storm their frameworks with rhapsodic imagination. Mendelssohn juxtaposes conventional sonata form with wild virtuosic interjections that blur and contradict the form’s contours, while Schumann turns the idea of Theme and Variations into an epic, multi-narrative, and indeed symphonic, form.