EVREN OZEL, piano
Winner, 2021 Concert Artists Guild Competition

Program 1: “Pervasive Polyphony”

SCARLATTI:
Sonata in A Major, K208 (4 minutes)
Sonata in D minor, K9 (3 minutes)
Sonata in G Major, K427 (2 minutes)

CHOPIN:
Ballade No. 4 in F minor, Op. 52 (11 minutes)

LIGETI:
Etudes, Book I: No. 2 “Cordes à vide” (3 minutes)

RACHMANINOV:
Variations on a theme by Corelli, Op. 42 (18 minutes)

— Intermission —

BACH:
From Das Wohlfahrtskler, Book I
  Prelude and Fugue in E-flat Major, BWV852 (5.5 minutes)
  Prelude and Fugue in E minor, BWV855 (3 minutes)
  Prelude and Fugue in A Major, BWV864 (3.5 minutes)

BEETHOVEN:
Sonata No. 32 in C minor, Op. 111 (26 minutes)

This program explores polyphony, the musical concept of multiple independent melodic lines occurring at the same time. This concept is primarily associated with Johann Sebastian Bach, particularly (for pianists at least) his 48 Preludes and Fugues of the Well-Tempered Clavier, some of the most adept examples of polyphonic writing. All the pieces on this program exhibit mastery of counterpoint: there is some fugal writing in Beethoven’s final Sonata Op. 111, which is something he did quite often in his late sonatas; Rachmaninov’s Corelli Variations are filled with complex inner voices which lead to chromatic harmonies; and in the short Etude by Ligeti titled “Cordes à vide” or “Open Strings”, we get a glimpse of the concept of micropolyphony and net structures, two musical concepts critical to Ligeti’s output.
Program 2: “Images and Chapters”

DEBUSSY:
Preludes, Book II (40 minutes)

— Intermission —

SCHUMANN:
Arabeske, Op. 18 (6 minutes)
Kreisleriana, Op. 16 (35 minutes)

This program includes music by my two favorite composers to perform: Claude Debussy and Robert Schumann. They were both pianists, and so I think their music is incredibly well-suited to the instrument: the challenges in their works feel more to me like adventures rather than obstacles. Debussy’s twelve preludes from Book II are short coloristic masterpieces that each represent an image or a scene (some examples include dead leaves falling from an autumn tree, the fireworks in France on Bastille Day, or Charles Dickens’ character S. Pickwick Esq.). The two works by Schumann demonstrate his affinity for literature, written like novels with separate chapters, but all a part of the same story. His Kreisleriana, according to some sources, takes the form of a double-novel structure, inspired by a particular double-novel in which some parts are told from the perspective of a cat.

Program 3: “Chopin: Dances of Poland”

CHOPIN:
3 Mazurkas, Op. 56 (12 minutes)
Polonaise in A-flat Major, Op. 53 (7 minutes)
4 Mazurkas, Op. 41 (10 minutes)
Mazurka in C-sharp minor, Op. 50 No. 3 (5 minutes)
3 Mazurkas, Op. 59 (11 minutes)
Andante spianato and Grande Polonaise in E-flat Major, Op. 22 (14 minutes)

Chopin’s music has been a huge part of my life since I was a very little kid, particularly growing up with a Polish pianist for a step-father. Some of Chopin’s best pieces are those which pay tribute to his homeland of Poland: namely the Mazurkas and Polonaises. The polonaises are elegant, dignified, and at times exuberant. The mazurkas are introspective, more intimate dances, which I feel get to the deepest parts of Chopin’s soul.