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CARSON BECKE

IN CONCERT



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2020 at 2:00PM

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Billy Joel



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Program

Carson Becke (b. 1989)/Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924):
Tosca Fantasy

Frederic Chopin (1810-1849):
Nocturne in F minor, op. 55 no. 1

Julius Reubke (1834-1858):
Piano Sonata in B flat minor
i. Allegro maestoso -
ii. Andante sostenuto -
iii. Allegro assai

Program note:

The Covid-19 pandemic has unquestionably been disastrous for the world, and has wreaked havoc on all aspects of life as we knew it. However, all situations present opportunities, and the opportunity that the pandemic presented to me (alongside the less welcome slew of emails cancelling all of my work engagements!) was time. Time to pursue a number of large-scale musical projects that had been at the back of my mind for years, but which required too much time and mental space to begin while trying to fulfill the demands of daily life as it existed pre-pandemic. So, as the country lurched into full lockdown mode in mid-March, I realized the opportunity that had unexpectedly arisen, and began to work on these projects. This program presents the fruits of the first few months of the pandemic. My Tosca Fantasy is a large-scale paraphrase on the music from the first act of Tosca, in the tradition of the operatic paraphrases by Franz Liszt. In it, I have tried to capture the grand Roman atmosphere of the opening scenes, and have condensed the symphonic structure of the act into a compact 15 minute piece. The piece was premiered at an outdoor concert during the summer, but this concert will be its ‘indoor premiere’! Julius Reubke’s Piano Sonata in B flat minor has been at the top of my list of ‘dream pieces’ since I first heard it when I was 14, but due to its size and difficulty, there never seemed to be a good time to learn it until now. Reubke was one of Franz Liszt’s most gifted students, but due to his death at the tragically young age of 24, never attained any degree of fame in wider circles. However, as this piece demonstrates, his compositional and pianistic skills were prodigious. Cast in the mold of Liszt’s famous Piano Sonata in B minor, Reubke’s Sonata joins three movements together without a break to form a kind of ‘mega-sonata’.

Carson Becke, October 2020

Performers

Canadian Pianist Carson Becke (www.carsonbecke.com) has performed extensively in Canada, Great Britain, Continental Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and the Caribbean. A versatile pianist, he is at home as a recital and concerto soloist, chamber musician, and vocal collaborator. He is also the artistic director of Pontiac Enchanté, a concert series in Luskville, Quebec. After moving to the United Kingdom in 2005 to study at the Purcell School, Carson completed his undergraduate studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where he worked with Tatiana Sarkissova. Following studies in London, he completed an M.Phil. degree in performance and musicology at the University of Oxford, supported generously by the Sylva Gelber Music Foundation of Canada. He completed his doctorate (D.Phil.) in musicology at Magdalen College, University of Oxford, about Richard Strauss. He is grateful for the support of the Canadian Centennial Scholarship Foundation towards his doctoral studies. Alongside his research on Strauss, he is working on a multi-album recording project featuring Strauss's piano, chamber, and art song repertoire. The first two of these albums are available on iTunes and Spotify (an album of lieder with mezzo soprano Wallis Giunta, and a solo piano album). After living in the UK for 14 years, Carson moved home to Ottawa in 2019 where he continues to work as a freelance musician.

A Special Thanks to

Gloucester Presbyterian Church for their generosity in letting us use the space!

Bruce McGuire for setting up the livestream and sound!