~ BEETHOVEN LEGACY ~

Every musician can trace their teacher lineage up to one of the great masters of centuries past. It is this lineage that ensures that the legacy of musicians carry on through generations, and we celebrate the same legacy of Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) tonight. (A fun fact: our pianist for tonight can trace his lineage right up to Czerny and Beethoven as well!) As musicians around the world commemorate the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth this year, we are reminded again of his role in ushering in the Romantic era and his groundbreaking symphonies, concertos, and chamber works. Beethoven's numerous students ensured that his music remains relevant and accessible even today.

We begin tonight's program with a work by one of his more famous students, Carl Czerny, best known for the numerous finger exercises he wrote that have, for better or for worse, haunted pianists to this day. As a student, Czerny admired Beethoven's facility for improvisation, technique, and adroit fingerwork on the piano, and attempted to capture such skills in his pedagogical methods. Czerny in turn premiered, performed, and taught many of his teacher's works in Europe.

Little, however, is known about Czerny the composer. Czerny's language is distinctly classical, with brief harmonic forays into the romantic. His texture is clear, and form concise. It is this style that we see in his **Fantasia Concertante for Piano, Flute, and Cello, op. 256**. Conceived as a single movement work, the 15-minute piece can be roughly divided into an introduction and three movements (fast, slow, and fast), not unlike the Fantasies and sonatas of other classical composers. The piece is united in Czerny's use of the dotted rhythm first introduced in unison, then presented in the numerous themes of the piece. Czerny, predictably, is unrelenting in his piano writing, but the flute and cello parts are no less interesting. The last third of the piece is a set of variations, a form that Beethoven favored, with each spotlighting one instrument and its technical capabilities, before culminating in a grand and exciting race to the double bar line.

One of Czerny's students, Franz Liszt, became a piano icon as an overtly flashy performer and composer. While Liszt's style further delved into the Romantic era, it drew criticism from many of his peers, including Robert Schumann. Schumann may not have studied with Beethoven or any of his students, but he lived in awe of the great master. While Schumann had both feet planted firmly in Romantic harmonies and expanded forms, he never abandoned the classical structures (at least, until his later illness revealed a more dramatic personality.) In fact, Schumann the scholar started and edited the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, a music magazine that today still searches for and reviews the top musicians in the world. In the early years of the newspaper Schumann clearly extolled the values of Germanic Classicism, praising musicians like Mendelssohn above the likes of Liszt. He was not denying the Romantic ideals, but rather advocating measured development.

Fantasiestücke, Op. 73, was originally written for clarinet and piano, but then rearranged for viola, violin, cello and other instruments due to popular demand. This late work showed Schumann's years of study and constant improvement. The piece almost mirrors his own slow progress into madness. The first movement is dreamlike, with a sole meandering melody exploring Schumann's harmonic soundscape. The second is playful and light hearted with a contrasting middle section, just like a minuet-and-trio movement. The finale, in a familiar ternary form with a coda, is dramatic and passionate, with Schumann directing the performers to play *schneller* (faster), not once, but twice as they get to a frenzied and triumphant ending.

Beethoven's **Turkish March** comes from the incidental music he wrote to accompany the play, *The Ruins of Athens*, by August von Kotzebue. This piece shows a less heard side of Beethoven. Even though this was written late in his career, the march is lighthearted and jolly. It is written in the popular style of that time, influenced by Turkish marching bands that traveled through much of Europe. You can hear similarities with the more popular *Rondo Alla Turca* by Mozart - a clear duple meter, imitations of cymbals and drums, and consistent rhythmic drive. In Beethoven's piece, you can hear the procession approaching from the distance and then departing at the end.

While Beethoven was reportedly an excellent pianist while also a master composer, later generations of musicians eventually specialized in one or the other. It was not until Sergey Rachmaninoff that another great performer and composer surfaced. Rachmaninoff, who studied with Czerny's student Alexander Siloti, was best known for his grand romantic gestures and long sweeping melodies. Today we hear his **Prelude in C-sharp minor, Op. 3 No. 2**, arguably one of his more well-known solo works. Written right after his graduation from the Moscow conservatory, we hear Rachmaninoff's early manifestation of his harmonic language and his rejection of the more dissonance sounds his peers in the early 20th century preferred. This prelude was nicknamed "the Bells of Moscow" after its successful premiere in the United States, but Rachmaninoff grew to dislike it after having to play it so much that he wished he had never written it.

Beethoven's **Romance in F, op. 50**, is one of only two with the title. Originally written for violin and orchestra, it is performed here today by flute and piano. Shorter than a concerto but still a substantial statement, Beethoven manages to balance stateliness and serenity in the piece that calls for long singing melodies in the *Adagio Cantabile* tempo. Using the rondo form meant he could repeat the melody several times with new material added on to each appearance of the theme, similar to a theme and variation. The title "Romance" harks to a newer style of Beethoven's writing - one that departs from the elegant and enlightened Classicism to the more personal and expressive Romantic. Indeed, the piece may evoke images in your mind as you listen and let your imagination wander.

The final piece of this evening is Beethoven's **Trio in B-flat Major for Clarinet, Cello, and Piano, Op. 11,** performed tonight with flute instead of clarinet. This early work was dedicated to Countess Maria Wilhelmine von Thun, who was formerly a patron of Mozart. In this piece we see how Beethoven celebrated the idea of legacy by emulating the earlier composers. The trio is classical in nature, with three movements: fast, slow, and fast again. The first movement is in a standard sonata form, using the key of B-flat which was more suitable for clarinets of the late 18th century. The second movement contains a beautiful *adagio* melody passed between instruments.

The finale contains a set of nine variations on the aria "Pria ch'io l'impegno." The form was a throwback to the classical composers Mozart and Haydn. Beethoven wrote over 60 variations in his life, using the form to push boundaries for each instrument, or to expand his harmonic language and form in his symphonies. The theme, this time, comes from a popular opera "L'amor marinaro ossia il corsaro" (A Sailor's Love) by Josef Wiegl. The aria itself, translated as "Before I go to Work", has some frivolous libretto, but the catchy tune led people to hum or even sing it as they walked down Vienna's many streets (*Gasse* in German). This earned the trio its nickname *Gassenhauer*, and you will quite likely have an earworm all night after hearing this finale.

Written by Chee-Hang See