



**ELON**  
UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF  
**Music**

*Presents*

**Erin Armstrong, *piano***

Whitley Auditorium  
Monday, April 6, 2020  
5:00 p.m.

# Program

Sonata in C Major, Op. 2, No. 3  
Allegro con brio  
Adagio  
Scherzo: Allegro  
Allegro assai

**Ludwig van Beethoven**  
(1770-1827)

Etude in E Major, Op. 10, No. 3

**Frederic Chopin**  
(1810-1849)

Sonatine

- I. Modéré
- II. Mouvement de menuet
- III. Animé

**Maurice Ravel**  
(1875-1937)

*This recital is presented as part of the Music in Liberal Arts degree. Erin is a student of Dr. Victoria Fischer Faw.*

## Program Notes

**Ludwig van Beethoven** (1770-1827) was a German composer of the Classical Era. He is known for his expansion and experimentation of form. While he was born in Germany, he spent most of his life in Vienna where he became famous as a pianist and teacher. Vienna is where Beethoven met his great teacher, Joseph Haydn. Although the relationship between Haydn and Beethoven was complicated, there is no doubt about the importance of Haydn's influence. The influence of Haydn can be seen especially in Beethoven's mastery and expansion of Haydn's formal compositional techniques. Beethoven was able to master the formal innovations he learned from Haydn to create something new and unique, and dedicated his Opus 2 sonatas to his teacher.

Sonata in C Major, Op. 2, No. 3 was written in 1795. The three sonatas of Opus 2 were Beethoven's first published piano sonatas. Beethoven composed these works during what is generally referred to as his early compositional period, which was characterized by the mastery of Classical formal style and techniques, and the beginnings of his expansion and experimentation of those elements in his compositions. Other important works during this period include his Op. 1 Piano Trios (1794-5), his first two Piano Concerti (1795), and his Symphony No. 1 (1801). Around 1798, Beethoven began to lose his hearing, and was fully deaf by 1816 when he was 46 years old. The progression of his hearing loss contributed to the evolution of his style through his three compositional periods. The second, or middle, period is characterized by continued and more extreme formal experimentation and expansion of scope and size, as well as the establishment of a powerful and personal voice. In his late period, fully deaf, Beethoven became more introspective and other-worldly. His stylistic evolution represents the fulfillment of Classical style and the bridge into the Romantic age, and Op. 2, No. 3 illustrates the full potential of Beethoven's genius in its early maturity.

This year marks the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Beethoven's birth, promising many performances of his works, including mine. This sonata uses the joyful key of C major in the first and fourth movements, giving them an exuberant flare. Filled with double 3rds, octaves, trills and scales, the first movement is a virtuosic display. The second movement begins with a somber and elegiac meditation in E major, which alternates with a swirling e minor section featuring extensive hand crossings. The third movement is a scherzo and trio --- an early example of Beethoven's reframing of Haydn's minuet and trio into the faster and more energized scherzo. The fourth movement returns to the vigorous and virtuosic energy of the first, featuring in this case passages of fast parallel triads. Haydn's influence is strongly reflected in this sonata through the formal and developmental techniques of sonata-allegro form, the multi-movement sonata-cycle concept, and through occasional moments of Haydnesque musical humor in the fast movements. Beethoven's own emerging individual voice is evident in the broad emotional scope of the work and its pianistic technical requirements. Beethoven premiered this work himself in Vienna in 1796.

**Frederic Chopin** (1810-1849) was a Polish composer who was one of the key figures of early 19<sup>th</sup>-century Romanticism. Unlike most other major composers, he composed almost exclusively for the piano. Chopin met Carl Czerny (Beethoven's most famous piano student) in Vienna in 1828 and was influenced by Czerny's prodigious volumes of piano etudes. An etude, which translates as "study," was originally designed as a technical exercise to develop piano technique. Chopin took the concept and transformed the merely technical etude into concert art, while retaining the didactic purpose.

Many of the etudes Chopin composed, including Opus 10, were dedicated to his friend and rival Franz Liszt who was himself a student of Czerny. At about the same time as Chopin, he also composed a number of concert etudes, including the "Transcendental Etudes," dedicated to Czerny, intended for the same general purpose of elevating the artistic content of the music while expanding the possibilities of piano technique. Chopin and Liszt knew and respected each other well, and their relationship represented their mutual admiration and friendship, which contained a good measure of professional rivalry.

Chopin's Opus 10 etudes were written between 1829 and 1832 as he traveled around Warsaw, Vienna, and Paris. Each etude addresses a particular technical goal. Etude in E major, Op. 10, No. 3, written in 1832, pinpoints the ability to balance the top melody with other voices in the same hand. Unlike most of his other etudes, this one is slower and more lyrical, illustrating Chopin's cantabile style. The A section of this piece is poetic and song-like while the B section is virtuosic and builds emotional intensity until it resolves back to the lyrical A section. Etude in E major is a brilliant composition full of lyricism and beauty.

**Maurice Ravel** (1875-1937) was a French Impressionist composer who spent nearly all of his life in France. Ravel and Debussy, the two most prominent musical Impressionists, were friendly at the beginning of their relationship but became less fond of one another over time as their fans started to turn them against each other by picking favorites. Ravel's compositional style incorporates elements of Neoclassicism, a movement that arose between the world wars where composers sought to turn back to Classical and Baroque styles and forms. Neoclassicism was a reaction against the perceived excesses of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Romanticism.

The first movement of the Sonatine was completed in 1903 and entered into a competition sponsored by the *Weekly Critical Review*, which required a sonatina movement no longer than 75 bars. The competition was canceled due to financial collapse of the periodical. In 1905, two years later, the second and third movements were added. Sonatine is dedicated to Ida and Cipa Godebski, whose children were the later dedicatees of his "Mother Goose Suite". The full Sonatine was premiered in Lyon, France in 1906 with a Paris premiere soon after by Gabriel Grovlez.

Although the tonal language is that of 20<sup>th</sup>-century French Impressionism with its abundance of whole tone, pentatonic, and modal tonal content, the influences of Neoclassicism can be seen in each of the three movements. Movement I, in F sharp minor, is written in sonata-allegro form, characteristic of the Classical Era. Like 18<sup>th</sup>-century sonatinas, the form is compact, with a short development section. This movement has a mystical ambiance and a song-like melody. The second movement, in D flat employs a minuet rhythm, characteristic of the Baroque Era. Finally III, returning to F sharp minor, is written in sonata-allegro form with a brilliant, toccata-like style, full of energy and grace. A descending fourth motive (and its inversion of a fifth) is featured throughout the work, providing compositional unity. Elegant and expressive, sparkling and colorful, Ravel's Sonatine masterfully marries the Classical ideals of balance and transparency with the sensual tonal language of musical Impressionism.