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Dear Piano Friends,

We have to be together to make the music and the magic happen. It is so good to be with you again today.

The building in which we sit this Saturday or Sunday afternoon – where I’d reckon we’ve all sat many a time for splendid music – was built in 1912 as the fifth building to house Lincoln High School. It became part of what is now called Portland State University in 1949.

Or, you may be with us on Thursday evening at the sparkling new Patricia Reser Center for the Arts. So nice to have you here, too.

A bazillion memories have been made in these places. So many of the best ones are about unbelievable pianists who thrilled us so deeply that we were somehow changed. How great is that?! There are so many memorable moments yet to come.

There is just something that can’t be matched in simply being together in one place at just that one time to hear the transcendent stuff of a great piano recital. We’ve been gathering as the PPI family for 45 years. It’s been great to be with you. (I've subscribed for the past 32 years!)

As you know, we've had a last-minute change of artist for this program and, of course, a different selection of pieces comprising these two recitals. While we so regret Ilya Raskovskiy’s unfortunate inability to get a visa from the U.S. State Department in time to come to us, we are so happy to present Kenny Broberg to you. We are confident you will be thrilled with his choices and insights as a pianist.

In this program booklet, you will find biographical information about Kenny and program notes about his selections, etc. More important, what we hope you feel at all times with PPI is our genuine camaraderie as fellow piano lovers. You so inspire us.

It never feels right to me to say “welcome” to you because, in truth, we all welcome one another whenever we gather for this great music. I will, rather, say thank you for all that you bring to the magic of these remarkable moments.

All the best,

Bill Crane
Executive Director

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From the earliest, adventuresome days of what we now call Portland Piano International, 44 years ago, when founder Harold Gray envisioned enriching our city with music from the world’s greatest pianists, countless generous donors have come forward to make that music happen. On your behalf, we say again here how grateful we are for their generosity and for what this all has done for our ears, minds, and hearts!

You are probably listed in the big acknowledgment below. Thank you! You and your fellow piano lovers have created and sustained a distinguished recital series, plus a really admirable suite of related educational programs. Your belief in PPI’s mission means the world to us. Thank you again.

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Winner of the 2021 American Pianists Awards and the Christel DeHaan Classical Fellowship, Kenny Broberg credits his first exposure to classical music to his Italian grandfather’s love of the “Three Tenors.” Broberg began piano lessons on his family’s upright piano at age six and during his childhood in Minneapolis began studying piano with Dr. Joseph Zins at Crocus Hill Studios in Saint Paul. Throughout high school, he balanced his musical lessons with playing baseball and hockey. He remains an avid fan for both the Minnesota Twins and Wild and checks their scores while on breaks during his practice.

During his auspicious career before winning the American Pianist Awards, Kenny Broberg captured the silver medal at the 2017 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition and a bronze medal at the 2019 International Tchaikovsky Competition as well as prizes at the Hastings, Sydney, Seattle and New Orleans international Piano Competitions, becoming one of the most decorated and internationally renowned pianists of his generation. Broberg is lauded for his inventive, intelligent and intense performances.

“Broberg mastered everything he performed over the weekend, pulling a palette of moods from every register,” The Indianapolis Star writes of Broberg’s performance during the Finals for American Pianists Awards. “In the ‘Dante Sonata’ from Liszt’s Years of Pilgrimage, the pianist easily captured the drama in the journey, marrying all of the energy of those emotions in the epic ending.”

Broberg earned a Bachelor of Music degree in 2016 at the University of Houston’s Moores School of Music, studying under Nancy Weems. He continued his studies at Park University in Parkville, Missouri, under the direction of Stanislav Ioudenitch, the gold medalist at the 2001 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. Starting in the 2022-2023 academic year, Broberg joined the Reina Sofía School of Music in Madrid as Deputy Professor of the Fundación Banco Santander Piano Chair led by Ioudenitch.

Performing on stages and in concert halls across Europe, Asia, Australia, and North America, Broberg has worked with some of the world’s most respected conductors, including Ludovic Morlot, Kent Nagano, Leonard Slatkin, Vasily Petrenko, Nicholas Milton, John Storgårds, Carlos Miguel Prieto, Gerard Schwarz and Stilian Kirov. He has collaborated with the Royal Philharmonic and the Minnesota, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Sydney, Seattle and Fort Worth Symphonies, among others.

He has been featured on WQXR, Performance Today, Minnesota Public Radio and ABC (Australia) radio, and presented his original composition “Barcarolle” on NPR in March 2021. As part of the American Pianist Awards, he will release his first studio album with the Steinway & Sons label in January 2023.
PORTLAND PIANO INTERNATIONAL PRESENTS

KENNY BROBERG INTERLUDES
AT THE RESER IN BEAVERTON

THURSDAY JANUARY 19 6PM

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PROGRAM

CÉSAR FRANCK (1822-1890)
Prelude, Fugue, and Variation in B Minor, op. 18, FWV 30 (1860-62)

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810-1849)
Ballade No. 4 in F Minor, op. 52 (1842, revised 1843)

NIKOLAI MEKTNER (1880-1951)
Sonata No. 7, op. 25, “The Night Wind” (1911)
   I. Introduzione; Andante; Allegro
   II. Allegro

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In the ‘Dante Sonata’ from Liszt’s Years of Pilgrimage, the pianist easily captured the drama in the journey, marrying all of the energy of those emotions in the epic ending.”
— THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR

SATURDAY / JAN 21 at 4PM
PROGRAM NOTES BEGIN ON PAGE 8

NIKOLAI MEDTNER (1880-1951)
Idyll-Sonata-Pastorale in G Major, op. 56 (1937)
I. Allegretto cantabile
II. Allegro moderato e cantabile (sempre al rigore di tempo)

CARL MARIA VON WEBER (1786-1826)
Sonata in E Minor, op. 70, J. 287 (1819-1822)
I. Moderato
II. Menuetto; Presto vivace ed energico; Trio leggiertmente e mormorando
III. Andante (quasi Allegretto) consolante
IV. Finale; Prestissimo

INTERMISSION

GABRIEL FAURÉ (1845-1924)
Barcarolle No. 9 in A Minor, op. 101 (1908-1909)
Nocturne No. 7 in C-sharp Minor, op. 74 (1898)
Barcarolle No. 8 in D-flat Major, op. 96 (1906)

FRANZ LISZT (1811-1886)
Fantasia quasi Sonata; Après une lecture du Dante (1849, published 1856)

SUNDAY / JAN 22 at 4PM
PROGRAM NOTES BEGIN ON PAGE 10

CÉSAR FRANCK (1822-1890)
Prelude, Fugue, and Variation in B Minor, op. 18, FWV 30 (1860-62)

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)
Sonata in E-flat Major, op. 81a, “Les adieux” (1809-1810)
I. Adagio (Das Lebewohl – The Farewell)
II. Andante espressivo (Abwesnheit – Absence)
III. Vivacissimamente (Das Wiedersehn – The Return)

INTERMISSION

AMY MARCY CHENEY BEACH (MRS. H. H. A. BEACH) (1867-1944)
Ballade, op. 6 (1894)

NIKOLAI MEDTNER (1880-1951)
Sonata No. 7, op. 25, no. 2 “The Night Wind” (1911)
I. Introduzione; Andante; Allegro
II. Allegro
NOTES ON THE PROGRAM
KENNY BROBERG
by BILL CRANE

SATURDAY / JAN 21

MEDTNER
Idyll-Sonata-Pastorale in G Major, op. 56

“Medtner’s music astonishes and delights...you may fancy that you have heard the melody before...But where, when, from whom, in childhood, in a dream, in delirium? You will scratch your head and strain your memory in vain: you have not heard it anywhere: in human ears it sounds for the first time...And yet it is as though you had long been waiting for it – waiting because you ‘knew’ it, not in sound, but in spirit.”

— RUSSIAN PHILOSOPHER IVAN ILYN

At an impressive total of 14 sonatas composed and published, Medtner seems to have taken the prize for most-sonatas-composed after Beethoven and Schubert. He has his passionate fans, among them today’s recitalist (who, I understand, even at his young age, plays all 14 sonatas) and Canadian pianist Paul Stewart: “The joy of Medtner is, in part, the joy of discovery: a wealth of little-known but magnificent music, the most significant achievement in this genre by any major composer since Beethoven.”

Today’s recital opens this weekend with Medtner’s last (14th) sonata. On Sunday, we will hear a completely different one, the Night Wind, from opus 25 and they could not possibly be more different from each other. As its title implies, this G Major sonata is gentle, its mood one of happy innocence.

Its genesis was borne of a request of his publisher that he write something less demanding, as the other sonatas are fiendishly difficult, in part to the end that amateur pianists might be more drawn to it and thereby encourage better sales. In just two movements, the first only three minutes long, the second more elaborate with three themes, it concludes sunnily with a sort of hymn.

This last, fine composition is quite touching when one thinks of Medtner being at that time a Russian composer exiled in London. In spite of living in a noisy suburb, and having had pretty much a troubled life, not to mention his decided lack of enthusiasm for modernism in art and bothered by the neglect of his own work, he kept composing, adhering to his own rules of artistic integrity. Fellow Russian composer Alexander Glazunov described him as “...the firm defender of the sacred laws of eternal art.”

1750
Death of Johann Sebastian Bach

1782
US Congress resolved establishment of a US mint

1794
First performance of Joseph Haydn’s 101st Symphony in D (“The Clock”) at the Hanover Rooms, in London, England
CHOPIN
Ballade No. 4 in F Minor, op. 52

“Chopin’s Ballade No. 4 in F Minor is broadly acclaimed as the pinnacle of Romantic music of the 19th century. Written during Chopin’s later years, the highly structured Ballade No. 4 – expressive of a piano form that he developed as his own along with the polonaise and scherzo – is regarded by some as summing up the achievements of his musical life. The intensity of the chief theme is followed by a pastorally expressive second theme. In the music can be detected his Slavonic roots. The great majority of his works are for solo piano. Though notation on paper rarely captures the freedom of his anticipation and delay of melody, a portion of the Ballade in F Minor does indeed capture, in its written form, the magic of this performance art.”

— ISRAELI PIANIST DROR BIRAN

Anything that a program annotator might say about Chopin, of course, is pretty much “preachin’ to the choir.” His music lies utterly at the heart of any piano lover’s love of the repertory and is universally something that one can listen to many times over. That said, it is handy to remember that Chopin created small pieces to be performed in small spaces, as opposed to the big forms, full of out-sized bravura, with which other composers looked to fill large halls. In his whole lifetime, Chopin gave only about 70 public performances. This is music of subtle sentiment and refinement, best heard close up.

Thus, with today’s Ballade, we are invited to a very intimate story-telling, for, indeed, ballades do just that. They differ from sonatas in that they likewise have contrasting themes, but a ballade, working differently, increases in dramatic intensity along the way. Most typically, they conclude with a grand apotheosis or, in this, the F Minor, a furious coda brings a whirlwind of notes and emotion. Chopin’s Ballades are the first known works written for piano under that name.

Bells seem to ring innocently at the beginning, then a little melancholy waltz ensues, then the bells return, but with noticeable pathos. A solemn barcarolle brings relief, even lightness, but that first theme returns, hovering. We are in a daydream. A new theme takes us on quite a ride via left-hand turbulence, then arpeggios and big block chords all over the place – then an abrupt pause.

The five beatific chords that follow lead to the coda’s unparalleled fury and a conclusion fairly called apocalyptic, full of bitterness and tragedy. Robert Schumann claimed that the Fourth Ballade was inspired by the poem The Three Budyrs from the Polish Romantic poet Adam Mickiewicz.

FAURÉ
Barcarolle No. 9 in A Minor, op. 101
Nocturne No. 7 in C-sharp Minor, op. 74
Barcarolle No. 8 in D-flat Major, op. 96

“Imagining is trying to formulate all one would wish to be better, all that surpasses reality.”

— GABRIEL FAURÉ

“Fauré sets to French musicians a matchless example of sincerity and genuineness. Neither following fashion nor listening to would-be advisers, he proceeded untrammelled in his quest for beauty. He remained simple, combining impassioned imagination and lucidity of mind. When one listens to his music one always feels secure that an apex is reached, that here is perfection. In the beautiful proportions of his music, a great lesson is embodied—a lesson that has never been more needful than now, when the younger French school is so deeply thrilled by the innovations of Schönberg, Stravinsky, and Bartók. The main features of French art at its best are continuity and perspicuity.”

— FRENCH COMPOSER AND MUSICOLOGIST CHARLES KOECHLIN

Fauré’s is certainly not an unknown name to lovers of music, particularly of the late Romantic and early “modern” sort. Indeed, most musicologists think of him as a sort of bridge between those demarcated eras. His deservedly famous “Requiem,” beloved of choirmasters of volunteer choirs for its ease of access, is performed so often that one often sees listeners nodding along, perhaps even humming very quietly, with its gently undulating melodies and subtle yet profound emotive content. It is such a necessary work to have on hand for all sorts of moods and occasions.

Fans of Fauré know as well that he was a prodigious composer of art songs, myriad barcarolles and nocturnes for piano, not to mention sonatas, waltzes, and impromptus among his 60 works for piano, thrilling chamber music, two operas, and much religious music. He was organist of two Paris churches, professor, then director, of the Paris Conservatory, faithful friend and inspiration to many other French composers, most of all Camille Saint-Saëns, and universal admired for his amiability and generosity. The American painter John Singer Sargent painted a wonderful portrait of him.

Nonetheless, his solo piano compositions are not often enough played on recitals, at least for me. I think we are lucky to hear these two Barcarolles and a Nocturne today. They come from different times in Fauré’s life and, thus, different aesthetic modes. His mastery of these “boat songs” in 6/8 time and of reverie peculiar to night-time tell us so much about his generosity and respectful ways with balance, proportion, and discretion. I hope that they will give us just the right soupçon of this part of his catalogue so that we all go out and look for more of it.
LISZT

**Fantasia quasi Sonata; Après une lecture du Dante**

“Music embodies feeling without forcing it to contend and combine with thought, as it is forced in most arts and especially in the art of words.”

— FRANZ LISZT

With a dizzyingly long catalogue of compositions and a biography full of thrills, spills, and exploits of all sorts, Franz Liszt in his own day and through to our own has been an object of adulation, admiration, and pro- and anti-partisanship forever. Liszt-lovers swoon to his music, most of all when it is well-played, a rare thing; some listeners, many of whom have too often heard less than well-played performances, often come away confused by the bombast and elaborateness of development of ideas, motifs, and melodies in his music.

To say the least, Liszt led an astounding life, part of which was marked by his extensive travels, including longer sojourns, much of it in Italy. He wrote whole series of piano pieces describing his reactions to visited places, calling the collection, in several volumes, the Years of Pilgrimage (Années de Pèlerinage). From the second volume, today’s *Dante Sonata* was inspired by a reading of Dante Alighieri’s most famous epic poem, the Divine Comedy. It was originally a small piece entitled *Fragment after Dante*, with two thematically related movements. In 1849, he revised and expanded that work into the present sonata.

It is developed from two main subjects. First, a chromatic theme in D Minor says something about the wailing of souls in hell. That theme also relies heavily on the tritone (an augmented fourth or a diminished fifth – think C natural to F-sharp), an interval sometimes called the “Devil’s interval.” A second, beatific theme in F-sharp Major stands in for the joy of those in heaven. Liszt’s imagination gave him license to project so much of commonly held thoughts about the afterlife into his musical score. As he often did, Liszt used a development technique called “thematic transformation” in which a basic motive is reprised throughout the work, but undergoes constant revision to appear in different roles. These transformations serve his guiding principal of “unity within variety,” a compositional technique for which he is well known. Requiring staggering virtuosity and steel nerves to play it, this sonata holds a quite special place in the piano literature.

SUNDAY / JAN 22

FRANCK

**Prelude, Fugue, and Variation in B Minor, op. 18, FWV 30**

“How I regret not having told César Franck of my profound admiration for him and his music. After playing the Sonata for violin for the first time, I nearly wept over certain phrases. The beauty of it overwhelmed me.”

— FRENCH-AMERICAN CONDUCTOR PIERRE MONTEUX

César Franck came along at just the right moment in the history of the organ and its music in France. Belgian by birth, he went to Paris early on and there encountered the revolutionary instruments of the organ-builder who was to have possibly the largest influence on organ aesthetics in the whole of the 19th century, Aristide Cavaillé-Coll. Much could be written about Cavaillé-Coll’s influence (he built some 500 organs in France in his lifetime), but that is a subject for another time. Leave it to say that he turned the instrument into a one-player-symphonic-machine. Franck became one of the builder’s greatest promoters and served the company as an artistic representative. After his appointment as organist at the then-new basilica of Ste-Clotilde, his improvisations on its great organ were a weekly must-hear among *le tout Paris*. A wonderful statue of him at the console is in the garden right in front of the basilica.

It is a masterful transcription of one of Franck’s most widely recognized and admired organ compositions that we hear in today’s recital. The third of six pieces published as opus 18, and dedicated to Saint-Saëns, the P F & V touches the listener with its balance and clarity, something completely appropriate to its dedicatee.

The prelude, opening in B Minor, is gentle and a bit melancholy, but not sad, just poignant. A masterful fugue, with its own little introduction, follows and at its climax presents a perfect segue into the single variation, effectively a repeat of the prelude, but with a subtle, rippling accompaniment, ending surprisingly and very movingly in B Major.

BEETHOVEN

**Sonata in E-flat Major, op. 81a, “Les adieux”**

“There is no real intelligence without goodness.”

— BEETHOVEN

One of the persistent discussions among musicologists is the whole business about “programmatic” and “absolute” music. That is, about music that is derived from another story, another source and that which stands alone. Among his 32 piano sonatas, Beethoven wrote really just one programmatic one. We will hear it today.

1831

Vincenzo Bellini’s opera “La Sonnambula” premiered at Teatro Carcano in Milan, Italy

1832

Felix Mendelssohn’s concert overture “Hebrides” premiered in London

1832

The source of the Mississippi River discovered by American geographer Henry Schoolcraft
The inspiration, if not the “tale,” is that in 1809 Napoleon’s army was just outside Vienna, bombing it repeatedly with cannons. In this situation, Beethoven’s close friend and patron, Archduke Rudolph was forced to flee. Beethoven’s response to this drama was this “Farewell” sonata, with its movement titles of “Farewell, Absence, and Return.”

In the first movement, we hear a theme of three descending notes, mi-re-do, imitating the call of a post-horn on someone’s departure. The notes “setting” the word Lebewohl (farewell), get broken up, re-cast, and developed in so many ways that the distinguished pianist Sir András Schiff once described them as simply “swimming in the Lebewohl motive.”

Diminished seventh chords, desolate in this context, reflect Beethoven’s lament at the absence of his beloved friend, made all the more poignant by piercing sforzandos alternated with sparkling flights of notes in a major mode that somehow reflect happier times, perhaps in a dream.

As is the case in the more familiar Waldstein and Appassionata sonatas, the slow movement leads right into the ecstatic celebration of “The Return.” The happiness of this ending of a tragic moment cannot be contained. We can easily hear in the movement’s themes the restored camaraderie and bonheur of re-joined friends. The development of melodic ideas is not strained and a reflective coda speaks of contentment at the good fortune of the departed one’s return. Just to be certain to reveal the magnitude of the happiness of the rejoining of friends, the movement ends in a fantastic rush up the keyboard in one last shout-out of joy.

MEDTNER
Sonata No. 7, op. 25 “The Night Wind”

“I think one of the reasons Medtner hasn’t had a chance is that his music needs very, very committed performances. If you play his works passively, the juice of his music is really not going to be extracted - it’s simply not going to come out.”

— CANADIAN PIANIST MARC-ANDRE HAMELIN

To conclude today’s program, Kenny has chosen an exceptionally long and demanding masterwork from one of the ions of the Russian piano tradition. One of Medtner’s 14 piano sonatas, as mentioned above, The Night Wind is the composer’s most extended work in the genre, a really monumental work that requires a lot of both the performer and the listener. It’s worth the effort! Not a few pianists and piano-nuts have called it the greatest piano sonata of the 20th century.

A vast one-movement work of some 35 minutes’ duration, it is headed by a quotation of Fyodor Tyutchev’s 1832 poem, Silenzium, “Of what do you howl, night wind . . .?” Dedicated to Sergei Rachmaninoff, who praised it immediately – although he never played it in public himself – The Night Wind bears forth so much of what we know about Medtner’s obsession with things spiritual, transcendental, etc. (He took all that to extreme extremes.)

“Oh, do not sing those fearful songs about primeval native Chaos! How avidly the world of the soul at night listens to its favorite story! It strains to burst out of the mortal breast and longs to merge with the Infinite . . . Oh, do not awaken the sleeping tempests; beneath them Chaos stirs!”

The first movement, with its time signature of 15/8, probably qualifies as the most extended piece of music ever in that meter. The second movement, a torrential improvisation upon themes from the sonata’s introduction, pushes the possibilities of expression to the limit. Nightmarish frenzy marks the whole work as even the interludes retain an undercurrent of anxiety. Finally arriving at a coda, we are greeted with fragments of all the themes heard prior over a pedal tone and the chaos starts to fade away. The music floats away, vanishing, with two swirling arpeggios.
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PPI remains committed to its artistic and educational mission by creating opportunities for young up-and-coming pianists (Rising Stars) and for mid-career Oregon piano teachers (Tholen Fellowship), commissioning new compositions for solo piano, inviting ardent piano students to take part in our programming at subsidized ticket rates, and by always striving to reach new audiences across the region.
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