Senior Recital:
Ho Kai-Li, Piano

J.S. BACH
French Suite No. 2 in C minor, BWV813

I.    Allemande
II.   Courante
III.  Sarabande
IV.   Air
V.    Minuet
VI.   Gigue

MOZART
Piano Sonata No. 18 in D major, K. 576

I.    Allegro
II.   Adagio
III.  Allegretto

PROKOFIEV
Piano Sonata No. 7 in B♭ major, Op. 83

I.    Allegro Inquieto B-flat major
II.   Andante Caloroso E major
III.  Precipitato B-flat major
PROGRAMME NOTES

**Johann Sebastian Bach** (1685-1750), one of the most prominent German composer in the Western Music History, wrote six French Suites in his late thirties which is one of his prolific periods of composing. These suites were included in the composer's Clavierbüchlein (Notebook) for Anna Magdalena Bach.

For tonight, I will be playing **French Suite No. 2 in c minor, BWV 813**. This French Suite lasts fifteen minutes long and contains six movements, each set in the home key of C minor: "Allemande," "Courante," "Sarabande," "Air," "Minuet," and "Gigue." Although it is named French Suite, it is actually a true German style, multi-movement keyboard suite.

The opening Allemande is in simple meter (4/4), introducing a steady and purposeful strokes that provides a solemn mood. This Allemande is also the longest of the suite’s movement. Following is the Courante, a lively character in 3/4, opens up with its lightness in contrast with the solemnity of the Allemande. This Courante is also of the quicker Italian variety, as opposed to the more solemn French one. Next, the Sarabande, extremely personal and introverted, explores a languorous and elegant 3/4 meter with exquisite changes of subtle emotions and mood, leading to the compact and pointy phrases of Air which is in 4/4 accompanied by the rhythmically-driven sixteen notes. The last pair are the Minuet and Gigue, the former displays an aristocratic and restrained disposition while the latter exhibits an extreme animated and lively character by the irrepressible catch rhythms (dotted 8th/16th/8th).

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** (1756-1791) is a child prodigy on keyboard and violin who writes more than six hundred works. **Piano Sonata No.18 in D major, K.576** is his last Piano Sonata which is considered one of the most technically difficult and contrapuntally-written sonatas of his composition. This Sonata is written in 1789 as part of a set of six for Princess Friederike of Prussia and has been nicknamed “The Hunt” or “The Trumpet Sonata” due to its opening theme.

The first movement is in sonata form, opens with the horn-call theme for the piece. The theme is then utilized and varied, leading to the final cadence in the dominant key A Major. Then, the second theme starts, giving a light and elegant character which is in contrast to the grandness feel of the first theme. The development explores different keys throughout, searching the final key to end, but only resolves at last before returning to the recapitulation, creating uncertainty, excitement, and suspense throughout the section. The horn-call theme returns, bringing back the grandioso and confident feeling.

The second movement starts off in the dominant key, providing an optimistic feeling only until the next section which transforms into an introverted and dark emotion in f sharp minor. The chromatic runs and non-chord tones hovering around the melody are what creates this extreme sorrowful and aching melody which pierces right through our heart. When hearing this melody, one can associate the opening of second movement of his Piano Concerto K.488 which was written only three years ago prior to this piano sonata.
The third movement is a mix of sonata and rondo form. This movement is a total contrast from the previous movements which shows the extreme playful and jubilant feeling. Nonetheless, the contrapuntal elements weaves throughout the movement. The on-going triplets alternating between both hands provide the virtuosity and excitement which is technically demanding, but if played well, gives the music extreme spark and brilliancy.

*Sergei Prokofiev’s* (1891-1953) last three Piano Sonatas has been named the “War Sonatas”. *Piano Sonata No. 7 in B♭ major, Op. 83* is the most famous and also in the middle of this grand trilogy. This Piano Sonata was composed in 1942 and was first performed on January 18th, 1943 in Moscow by Sviatoslav Ritcher. One can really depict the clear images of bombs and the war scenes when listening to this piece.

The first movement begins with an extreme dark and gloomy theme, soon being interrupted by the persistent and obstinate bass and clashing chords. Following is the second theme, although lyrical but still maintains the dark and murky quality. The development section then continuously grabs the high intensity and tension and builds up to a powerful climax, as if the bombs being all over the places. The second theme then returns back, leading into a short coda which ends with extreme quietness but maintains its exceedingly high intensity and anxiety.

The opening theme of second movement is based on Robert Schumann’s Liederkreis, op.39, ‘Wehmut’: “I can sometimes sing as if I were glad, yet secretly tears well and so free my heart. Nightingales... sing their song of longing from their dungeon’s depth... everyone delights, yet no one feels the pain, the deep sorrow in the song.” This opening theme begins with a very alluring melody with a gentle rocking lilt feeling. Next, the theme then dives into an extremely mysterious and chromatic section, lingering at different tonal centers which none of it relates to E that starts off the piece. During the search of tonal affirmation, it arrives at a resonant and loud bell-like climax and finally goes back into the nostalgic opening theme.

This final movement is one the most well-known and dramatic movements. In ABCBA form, it starts with an insistent and obstinate rhythmic pattern, bringing out the highly active and driven mood right at the start of the piece. The second theme keeps the rhythmic drive, leading from the lower register to high. After the second theme, the main theme comes back this time with much more frenetic drive that welcomes the enormous victorious ending in a brilliant writing.

*Programme Notes by Ho Kai-Li*