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Program

Sonata in F minor K. 466  
D. Scarlatti  
(1685-1757)

Piano Sonata No. 17 in D minor, Op. 31 No. 2  
L. v. Beethoven  
(The Tempest)  
Largo – Allegro  
Adagio  
Allegretto  
Intermission

Pictures at an Exhibition  
M. Mussorgsky  
(1839-1881)

Promenade I  
The Gnome  
Promenade II  
The Old Castle  
Promenade III  
Tuileries: Children's Quarrel after Games  
Cattle  
Promenade IV  
Ballet of the Unhatched Chickens  
“Samuel” Goldenberg and “Schmuyle”  
Promenade V  
Limoges. The Market (The Great News)  
Catacombs: Roman Tomb  
With the Dead in a Dead Language  
The Hut on Hen’s Legs  
The Bogatyr Gates (In the Capital in Kiev)

Program Notes

Sonata in F minor K. 466  
A Baroque composer, contemporary of Handel, Domenico Scarlatti composed more than 550 one-movement keyboard sonatas. In order to capture its ethereal ambiance, the soloist must perform this challenging piece with a delicately connected legato and free of accents. The grace notes embellish the melodic line adding a propelling harmonic rhythm.

Piano Sonata No. 17 in D minor, Op. 31 No. 2  
L. v. Beethoven  
The "Tempest Sonata" was conceived when Beethoven was agonizing over his increasing deafness. As his affliction aggravated, he believed that total silence was his fate. This piece is emotionally powerful and it allows several different interpretations. In the first movement, we can see the tragedy of Beethoven’s plight. One of Beethoven’s pupils, Carl Czerny, once asked the composer how to play the first movement and Beethoven replied, "play as loud as possible." The second movement is written in a shortened sonata form, a cavatina. In this slow and moving movement, you can imagine the composer’s own take on his funeral with ceremonial drum ruffles and flourishes. The mood of tragedy is finally broken in the third movement, where Beethoven breaks free with a dance-like rondo in molto perpetual motion. This movement has an energy and defiance that we recognize in the mature and confident master.

Pictures at an Exhibition  
M. Mussorgsky  
Pictures at an Exhibition consists of musical depictions of 10 paintings by Viktor Hartmann, interspersed with a recurring “Promenade” theme, or intermezzo, that represents a visitor—in this case, the composer himself—strolling through the exhibition. Mussorgsky acknowledged the powerful nature of the intermezzi, in one of his letters. Following the opening “Promenade,” the first four movements, or “pictures,” in order of appearance, are: “The Gnome,” a depiction of an awkward dwarf conveyed through irregular rhythms and forceful outbursts; “The Old Castle,” a solemn and lyrical portrayal of a medieval troubadour singing on the grounds of a grand castle; “Tuileries,” a sprightly sketch of children at play in the well-known Tuileries Gardens in Paris; and “Bydlo,” a ponderous characterization of the lumbering of a large Polish ox cart. The scampering fifth movement, “The Ballet of Unhatched Chickens” represents a costume design by Hartmann for a children’s ballet. The sixth scene evokes an image of “Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle” frequently called “Two Jews: One Rich, One Poor” through the interplay of a strident melody in the lower register and a twittering chantlike theme in the upper register. The folksy and cheerful quality of the seventh movement, “Limoges,” differs strikingly from the eighth, “The Catacombs,” which casts an eerie shadow with ominous chords and variations on the recurring intermezzo in the following movement “With the dead in a dead language”. The last two scenes of Pictures at an Exhibition are the most renowned. “The Hut on Fowl’s Legs” is a nightmarish portrayal of the cackling witch Baba-Yaga on the prowl for her prey. She charges—bounding in a virtuosic passage in octaves—right into the tenth and final picture, “The Bogatyr Gates” or “The Great Gate of Kiev.” Mussorgsky brings the piece to a majestic conclusion, using a depiction of Hartmann’s sketch of a city gate topped by cupolas in which bells ring. Although originally composed in 1874 for solo piano, Pictures became particularly better known as the orchestral arrangement by the French composer Maurice Ravel in 1922.