




Celebrity Series of Boston

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Celebrity Series of Boston

Wednesday | April 11, 2018 | 8pm | Longy's Pickman Hall

Rafał Blechacz piano

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| W.A. Mozart | Rondo in A minor, K.511 |
| Mozart | Sonata in A minor, K.310
<i>Allegro maestoso</i>
<i>Andante cantabile con espressione</i>
<i>Presto</i> |
| Ludwig van Beethoven | Sonata No. 28 in A Major, Opus 101
<i>Etwas lebhaft, und mit der innigsten Empfindung</i>
<i>Lebhaft. Marschmäßig</i>
<i>Langsam und sehnsuchtsvoll</i>
<i>Geschwind, doch nicht zu sehr und mit Entschlossenheit</i> |

INTERMISSION

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| Robert Schumann | Sonata No. 2 in G minor, Opus 22
<i>Allegro</i>
<i>Romanze</i>
<i>Scherzino</i>
<i>Intermezzo</i>
<i>Finale</i> |
| Frédéric Chopin | Mazurkas, Opus 24
<i>Lento in G minor</i>
<i>Allegro non troppo in C Major</i>
<i>Moderato con anima in A-flat Major</i>
<i>Moderato in B-flat minor</i> |
| Chopin | Polonaise in A-flat Major, Opus 53 |

*This evening's concert is being recorded for
 future broadcast on 99.5 WCRB, Classical Radio Boston.*

Debut Series Sponsors
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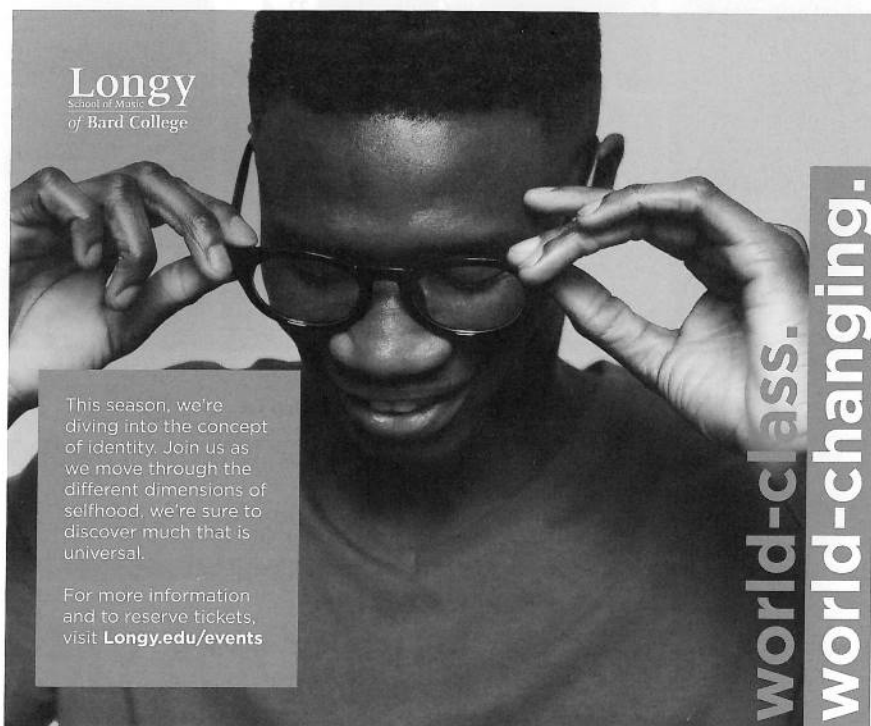
Welcome to the sixth season of the Debut Series at the Longy School of Music

The Debut Series was launched in 2012 as a showcase for artists in the early stages of their careers in Boston debut performances. The Celebrity Series of Boston and the Longy School of Music of Bard College have formed this unique partnership to allow the talents of these young international artists to be experienced in the acoustic excellence and atmospheric intimacy that Pickman Hall delivers so well. In addition to performing, each Debut Series artist conducts a master class or educational session with students from the Longy School, providing them unique access to professional artists only slightly older than they are, and providing life lessons as well as musical ones. The combination of performance and education stem from our shared values emphasizing musical excellence, and also focus on the emotional and humanistic development of artists.

With thanks to sponsors Harriet and David Griesinger, we are proud to present this season's group of Debut Series artists in performance, and to enrich the Longy students' development as musicians who make a difference.

Longy
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Celebrity Series of Boston



This season, we're diving into the concept of identity. Join us as we move through the different dimensions of selfhood, we're sure to discover much that is universal.

For more information and to reserve tickets, visit Longy.edu/events

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world-changing.

Notes on the program

W.A. Mozart (1756-1791)

Rondo in A minor, K.511 (1787)

Leaving behind the security of a steady (and stifling) position in his hometown of Salzburg, Mozart arrived in Vienna in 1781 to try his luck as a freelance musician. For a time he did very well selling subscriptions to his self-produced concerts, but his lucrative run as a performer ended when a protracted war with the Ottoman Empire scattered Vienna's elites and dampened the city's appetites for musical entertainment. While Mozart redirected his efforts toward writing operas, he generated additional income by composing music for publication, such as the Rondo in A minor (K.511) issued in 1787 by the firm of Franz Hoffmeister. Chromatic dissonances and serpentine ornamentations made this a more nuanced and emotional work than the average fare for amateur pianists who might have bought published scores; in that regard it shared DNA with Mozart's opera from the same year, *Don Giovanni*, ostensibly a comedy but wracked with heavy emotions.

Mozart

Sonata in A minor, K.310 (1778)

Mozart's early music exemplifies the cheerful *galant* style that was most fashionable in the 1770s, and as such it was a rare exception when he composed an instrumental work in a minor key. The Sonata in A minor (K.310), his first minor-key sonata, dates to a particularly painful time, during the summer of 1778 in Paris. Not only did he fail to win a job to get him out of Salzburg, but also his mother, who had traveled with him, fell ill and died.

The opening *Allegro maestoso* launches its main theme with a striking dissonance, crunching up to the stable tone of E from a half-step below. Even when the secondary theme moves, as expected, to the related major key, it strikes up a nervous and restless theme in perpetual motion instead of a songlike retort. Mozart does bring out his characteristically tuneful melodies in the central *Andante cantabile*, where he instructs the pianist to play "with expression." The sonata's ending in A minor is all the more bleak after a fleeting visit to A major seems to promise relief.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Sonata No. 28 in A Major, Opus 101 (1816)

The piano sonata that Beethoven completed in 1816 emerged from the least productive period of his adult life, amid a custody battle for his nephew and his caretaking of the troubled boy. Those lean years in Beethoven's output demarcate his earlier phase of heroic, outward-facing music (his so-called "middle period") from his final decade of inward soul-searching (the "late period"), a time exemplified by his work in the intimate genres of piano sonatas and string quartets.

That Sonata No. 28 in A Major, Opus 101, references the traditions of the recent past while also pointing the way forward, starting with its very labeling. At a time when Beethoven was among those looking to liberate the German-speaking world from its dependence

on Italian influence and terminology, he had his publisher list the instrument two ways on the cover page, giving both the Italian name, *Pianoforte*, as well as the German, *Hammerklavier*. (Beethoven's next sonata, Opus 106 from 1818, is the one known by the "*Hammerklavier*" nickname, perhaps because its more aggressive nature seems to fit better with the German term emphasizing the hammer action that strikes the piano strings, as opposed to the plucked harpsichord.)

Beethoven also translated the tempo markings from the Italian he originally used in the manuscript, such that the first movement's heading of *Allegretto ma non troppo* became *Etwas lebhaft und mit der innigsten Empfindung* ("Somewhat lively, and with the most intimate emotion"). This opening statement follows the expected structure of sonata form, but its swaying pulse and understated melodies create an impression more like a slow movement. The second movement responds with a lively march that bears traces of Beethoven's Baroque forebears in its dotted rhythms and crisp counterpoint. The sonata closes with a hybrid movement that connects an abbreviated slow section—the German heading calls for it to be played "Slow and yearningly"—to a moderately fast finale to be performed "with determination." Between these sections, a brief recall of the first movement floats past like a nostalgic daydream.

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Sonata No. 2 in G minor, Opus 22 (1830-1838)

Robert Schumann's own self-assessment, as of the age of twenty, was that his "talents as musician and poet are at the same level." He soon committed to a life in music, and he organized his life in Leipzig around piano lessons with the distinguished teacher Friedrich Wieck, but alas Schumann's fanatical practice regimen in 1830, combined with his ill-advised use of a finger-strengthening device, resulted in permanent damage to his right middle finger. The silver lining was that Robert came to know his teacher's daughter, Clara, a gifted prodigy who would become his wife twelve years after they first met.

The Sonata No. 2 emerged in stages during these formative years, when Schumann earned a living as a critic while honing his voice in music for solo piano. He drafted the *Andantino* in 1830, and then between 1833 and 1835 he fleshed out the complete four-movement sonata. When Clara declared the original finale "far too difficult" for the type of buyers who would purchase a published sonata, he replaced it in 1838, bringing the work to its final form.

The opening movement is no cakewalk itself, with the tempo marked "as fast as possible"—only to have it get faster and even faster still at the end. The scherzo and the replacement finale also pound insistently at the turbulent home key of G minor, the former in a "very fast and marked" setting filled with crunching chords, and the latter inundated with octave oscillations flying by at a rapid *presto* clip. Only the *Andantino* second movement provides relief, with its songlike melody lifted from Schumann's 1828 song setting of the poem *Im Herbste (In Autumn)*.

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

Mazurkas, Opus 24 (1833-35)

Frédéric Chopin was a piano prodigy who published his first works at age seven. Though essentially self-taught as a pianist, he received training in composition at Warsaw's High School of Music. Chopin left Warsaw in late 1830 for what was meant to be his first European tour, but a populist uprising in Poland and the subsequent crackdown by Russian forces ruled out the possibility of Chopin returning to his homeland. His travels eventually brought him to Paris, where he made a name for himself performing at exclusive salons (though rarely in public concerts), teaching private students, and publishing a steady stream of piano music.

Chopin's output centered on small-scale compositions in such genres as the Nocturne, Polonaise, Waltz, and most numerous of all, the Mazurka, a Polish dance style in a lively three-beat pattern that originated near Chopin's native Warsaw. The variety and richness he cultivated in this deeply ingrained style is on display in the four Mazurkas published in 1835 as his Opus 24. The longest and most celebrated Mazurka is No. 4 in B-flat minor, which peppers its folk-like themes with urbane chromatic inflections.

Chopin

Polonaise No. 6 in A-flat Major, Opus 53 (1842-43)

The Polonaise had a long history even before it became a signature genre of Chopin, Poland's greatest musical ambassador in France and beyond. What began as a Polish folk dance became one of the stylized forms that appeared in court music and instrumental suites of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially in France and Germany. Chopin began composing Polonaises in that generic, pan-European style as early as age seven, but before long he brought a true Polish character back into his native genre. The Polonaises were well received when Chopin relocated to Paris, and he continued writing them throughout his career.

Later generations bestowed an apt nickname, "Heroic," upon the Sixth Polonaise. The dissonant introduction functions as a bit of bait-and-switch trickery, preparing the grand arrival of the famous main theme. Two interludes of contrasting material serve to heighten the returns of the "heroic" phrases, which become all the more thrilling with each arrival.

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From the Celebrity Series of Boston archives...

Celebrity Series of Boston is pleased to present the Boston debut of pianist Rafał Blechacz.



Rafał Blechacz piano



Rafał Blechacz is the winner of the prestigious Gilmore Artist Award in 2014, an award given every four years to a distinguished, extraordinary concert pianist regardless of age or nationality. He is recognized as his generation's greatest performer of Chopin's works. In October 2005, unanimously, Blechacz won all prizes of the prestigious 15th Frédéric Chopin International Piano Competition. The young Polish pianist has since then established himself firmly on the international concert scene, and is celebrated by both audiences and the press worldwide for his profound and virtuosic interpretations.

Since returning to the stage following his sabbatical period in 2016, when he completed his PhD thesis in philosophy of music, Blechacz has performed with Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien and Minnesota Orchestra, been on tour with Camerata Salzburg and Kammerorchester Basel under the baton of Trevor Pinnock, and given recitals in Berlin's Philharmonie, Prinzregententheater Munich, Cité de la musique Paris, and Tisch Center New York, among others. Highlights of his 2017-18 season include a tour in Germany and the UK with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla as well as recitals in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan in autumn, then in New York, Boston, Atlanta, and Vancouver in the spring.

Rafał Blechacz is an exclusive recording artist of Deutsche Grammophon. His debut CD of Chopin Preludes won the Platinum Record status in his native Poland, as well as a German Echo Klassik and French Diapason D'or award. His CD of both Chopin concerti with the Concertgebouw Orchestra under the baton of Jerzy Semkow was awarded the "Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik." In 2012, his recording of works by Debussy and Szymanowski was released and awarded "Recording of the Month" by *Gramophone* magazine and "Solo Recording of the Year" by Echo Klassik. These were followed by the acclaimed release of his fifth album of Chopin Polonaises in 2013, and the most recent solo CD of works by J.S. Bach in 2017.

Born in 1985, Blechacz began his studies at age five, continuing his piano education at the Artur Rubinstein State School of Music in Bydgoszcz. In 2007, he graduated from the Feliks Nowowiejski Academy of Music in Bydgoszcz, the piano class of Professor Katarzyna Popowa-Zydroń. In 2010, he received the Premio Internazionale Accademia Musicale Chigiana (Italy), awarded annually by an international jury of music critics to young musicians for their outstanding artistic achievements.

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