

GRADUATE PIANO RECITAL

By

BENNY JOHN PLASENCIA

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A PERFORMANCE IN LIEU OF THESIS PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MUSIC

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Summary of Performance in Lieu of Thesis
Presented to the College of Fine Arts of the University of Florida
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May 2013

Chair: Kevin Robert Orr
Major: Piano Performance

This recital was prepared in collaboration with Dr. Kevin Robert Orr, it was intended to show the work of these two years of study and consisted of two parts that exposed three different periods and styles of music: Baroque, Classical, and Romantic. The first part consisted of a Prelude and Fugue by Bach and a Sonata by Mozart. The second part consisted of Schumann's Fantasy. The works were carefully selected in order to show the most important and major exponents of each period: Johann Sebastian Bach, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Robert Schumann respectively. This recital took place on April 2nd, 2013 at 5:00 pm in room 101 of the Music Building at the University of Florida.

Benny John Plasencia
M.M Piano Performance
April 2nd, 2013
MUB 101

Program

Prelude and Fugue in g minor, BWV 861

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Sonata in D major, K. 311

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

Allegro con spirito
Andantino con espressione
Allegro

Intermission

Fantasy Op. 17, in C major

Robert Schumann
(1810-1856)

Durchaus fantastisch und leidenschaftlich vorzutragen; Im Legenden-Ton
Mäßig. Durchaus energisch
Langsam getragen. Durchweg leise zu halten

Program Notes

The prelude and fugue in G minor, BWV 861, from the first book of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* (BWV 846–893), is the sixteenth in a collection of 48 solo keyboard preludes and fugues composed by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750). This collection of solo works was written with the intention that musical youth could learn and study keyboard literature, as a pastime, for those already skilled in such study. The prelude in g minor, Book I, is implicitly in *tempo ordinario* and has an airy melody with accompaniment, almost with a homophonic texture, recalls the slow movement of the *trio sonata*. In the other hand, the fugue is in four voices, based on two principal themes. The second one presents the two units of the first theme, but in reverse order and in inversion. This fugue could easily serve as an introduction for a choral fugue of one Bach's famous sacred *cantatas*.

Energetic and jovial, the Piano Sonata in D major, K. 311 was composed when Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) was in Mannheim in November 1777. It was the second of seven piano sonatas written between the fall of 1777 and the summer of 1778, the period of composition known as Mozart's 'Middle Period.' The Mannheim school, with its emphasis on unpredictable dynamic contrasts, likely had a great influence on these 'Middle Period' piano sonatas, which are filled with youthful energy and surprises. The Mannheim school refers to the group of composers who wrote music for the orchestra of Mannheim, as well as the orchestral techniques pioneered by the court orchestra of Mannheim, which was the finest orchestra in Europe at that time. Composers of the Mannheim school introduced several ideas into orchestral music including sudden crescendos – the Mannheim Crescendo (a crescendo developed by the whole orchestra); the Mannheim Rocket (ascending arpeggio phrases); the Mannheim Roller (an extended crescendo passage typically having a rising melodic line over an ostinato bass line); the Mannheim Sigh (phrases built from falling two note patterns) the Mannheim Birds (imitation of birds chirping in solo passages) and the Grand Pause where the playing stops for a moment, resulting in total silence, only to restart vigorously. Aspects of the Mannheim style are especially evident in the 3rd movement of the K. 311 sonata because of the sharp contrasts in texture and tonal color.

The Piano Sonata in D major is in three movements. The *Allegro* opens with a theme that is orchestral in conception. After a modulation to the dominant, there is a secondary theme that sounds much more like a keyboard solo with its Alberti bass figures and scalar melody. Mozart slowly increases the rhythmic intensity of the development section until a sudden stop near the middle, where piano and forte dynamics alternate. The order of events in the recapitulation is unusual. The second theme, now in the tonic, is followed by two ideas from the closing area, then the first theme, and finally a brief coda of entirely new material followed by the third closing idea. Mozart sets the G major *Andante* in what is often referred to as "rondo-slow-movement form," a variant of slow-movement sonata form (sonata form without a development section) in which the contrasting material (section B) is recapitulated in the tonic and followed by a return of section A. Sudden and wide dynamic contrasts are also a part of the *Andante*, which features an elegant opening theme fit for a vocal performance. The closing *Rondeau* is filled with energy and surprises. The first return of the rondo theme features a transposition of its second half to G major, which then introduces the second episode. The close of this episode is a cadenza passage with three different tempos that lead, concerto-like, into the return of the rondo

theme and the close of the movement.

Robert Schumann's (1810-1856) *Fantasie in C major, Op. 17*, is one of the finest examples of the Romantic piano style. Perhaps Schumann's greatest large-scale piano work, the *Fantasie* was written between 1836 and 1838 and dedicated to Franz Liszt. Intensely personal, it is believed to contain many melodic references to Schumann's then fiancée, Clara Wieck. This composition is in an unconstrained sonata form. It has three movements: “*Durchaus fantastisch und leidenschaftlich vorzutragen; Im Legenden-Ton*”, “*Mäßig. Durchaus energisch*”, and *Langsam getragen. Durchweg leise zu halten*”. The first movement (in C major) is rhapsodic and passionate, the middle movement (in E flat major) is a rondo based on a majestic march, with episodes that recall the emotion of the first movement and the finale is a slow and meditative movement in character.

Schumann's *Op. 17* occupies the delicate middle ground between art and experience. The composer projects his own voices through those of his alter egos Florestan and Eusebius, who dominate the second and third movements respectively, and collaborate in the first. Despite the apparent acceptance of Classical sonata proportions and structure, it is clear that the *Fantasy* does not resemble like a Classical or even post-Classical sonata. The first movement of this piece has no development, and it does not contrast themes of different character. It does not oppose tonic and dominant, it does not start at a point of rest, but it moves dramatically to a greater intensity and returns to a state of equilibrium.

This recital program submitted is in partial fulfillment of the MM in piano performance.
Benny John Plasencia is from the studio of Dr. Kevin Orr.

Biography

Benny John Plasencia is a concert pianist and native of Lima, Perú. He has played in important concert halls, earning several prizes in important competitions in Perú such as the Béla Bartók competition in Lima, the Lima Symphony Orchestra competition, the National Conservatory of Music Piano Competition as well as received the Joan C. Middleton award in South Carolina, the award from the National Association of Jewish Women in the United States, the Outstanding Student Award from the College of Charleston, South Carolina, and recently he was a finalist at the International Chopin Competition in South America, Peru. He has attended festivals in Milan, Basel, Madrid, Rome, Perugia, Lima, Tel Aviv, and in many cities around the United States. Mr. Plasencia has performed with the Lima Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra of the National Conservatory of Music in Lima, the Sinfonia Perugina in Perugia, Italy, the College of Charleston Symphony Orchestra, and the Interlochen Orchestra.

In 2001 Mr. Plasencia was awarded a full scholarship to study in Interlochen Center for the Arts in Michigan for the summer camp. In 2005, Mr. Plasencia was given a full scholarship to study at the College of Charleston in South Carolina, under the guidance of renowned concert pianist Enrique Graf. While in Charleston, he has performed concerts at the Piccolo Spoleto Festival interpreting the Concerto N° 3 by Rachmaninov. He is also a current member of the young artist series at Bishop Gadsden in Charleston, South Carolina.

Mr. Plasencia has recorded a CD of Peruvian music in Lima, Peru, featuring Ichuq Parwanta N°3 for marimba and piano by Peruvian composer Aurelio Tello. He has performed as a soloist in Peru, the United States, Italy and Israel. He was the pianist for Sprouts Children's Theater as well as part of the faculty at Creative Spark Center for the Arts in South Carolina.

During his free time, he volunteered at the Hollings Cancer Center, where he performed for fund raising events and recorded a hypnotherapy CD with counselor Roxann Hassett for cancer patients. He is fluent in Spanish, English, Russian, Italian and Hebrew. Currently Mr. Plasencia studies at University of Florida and working toward his Master's Degree in Music under renowned artist Kevin Orr.