



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
FACULTY OF MUSIC

DMA Recital II

**Bowen Li, Piano**

7:30pm June 17th 2023

Walter Hall

**PROGRAMME**

Trois Morceaux

D'un vieux jardin

D'un jardin clair

Cortège

Lili Boulanger  
(1893-1918)

Prelude and Fugue in E major from the Well-Tempered Clavier Book 2 BWV 878    Johann Sebastian Bach  
(1685-1750)

Piano Sonata in Eb Major K282

Adagio

Minuetto I - Minuetto II

Allegro

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
(1756-1791)

Piano Sonata in C major Op 53 ("Waldstein")

Allegro con brio

Introduzione: Adagio molto

Rondo: Allegretto moderato

Ludwig van Beethoven  
(1770-1827)

**INTERMISSION**

Piano Sonata in Bb minor Op 35

Grave - Doppio movimento

Scherzo

Marche funèbre: Lento

Finale: Presto

Fryderyk Chopin  
(1810-1849)

La Valse

Maurice Ravel  
(1875-1937)

This recital is in partial fulfillment of the Doctor of Musical Arts in Performance.

Bowen Li is a student of Jamie Parker.

Bowen Li is an Australian pianist who has been a finalist in many national and international competitions such as the 2014 2MBS FM Young Virtuosi Award, the 2014 Sydney Eisteddfod Allison and Henderson Scholarship, the 2019 Prix d'Orford and the 2022 Australian National Piano Award. Bowen has performed in Australia, North America and Europe and his performances have been featured on radio stations in Australia.

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We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

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### ***Trois Morceaux - Lili Boulanger***

Lili Boulanger is a mostly unknown composer, partly because she tragically died in an accident at the age of 25. She is the sister of the famous Nadia Boulanger, who had a profound influence on Western music of the 20th century, having taught most of the prolific composers of this period. Equally as talented as her sister, Lili Boulanger's few works are prodigious, absorbing the French tradition of Fauré and Debussy and synthesizing it into her own music language. In these three pieces, we can hear a youthful optimism. The first depicts an ancient garden with crumbling sculptures overgrown with vines. Boulanger expresses the nobility of the old garden, with its haunting echoes, and a brief glimpse into the grandeur of what it once was. The second is a garden full of light and glittering colour. The last movement depicts an entourage of interesting characters.

### ***Prelude and Fugue in E major from the Well-Tempered Clavier Book 2 BWV***

#### **878 - Johann Sebastian Bach**

Bach is sometimes considered as the granddaddy of Western music; like a real grandpa's stories, his music rambles on and on and eventually starts to all sound the same. This is probably because of his enormous musical output; you are bound to find two pieces with a similar sound. But like a real grandfather, if you carefully listen to what he says, you will find a wellspring of wisdom and life experience. The prelude takes the guise of an innocent minuet that conceals hints of grief and sorrow. The fugue is a humble hymn that seems to pray for calmer waters ahead and a brighter future for humanity.

### ***Piano Sonata in Eb Major K282 - Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart***

Mozart wrote 19 piano sonatas in his lifetime and this is the only one that begins with a slow movement. The sonata form typically stipulates that the first and last movement should be fast movements but composers will sometimes subvert this expectation for a particular effect. This sonata opens with an aria almost like a love song. The movement shimmers with naivety and optimism like a blue sky without a cloud in sight. The second movement comprises two charming minuets and the finale sparkles with a child-like mischief that is so idiomatic in Mozart's music.

### ***Piano Sonata in C major Op 53 ("Waldstein") - Ludwig van Beethoven***

This sonata sits in the middle of Beethoven's musical output and encapsulates the transition from his vivacious early works to his introspective later works. The first movement embodies his fiery youthful spirit with vigorous rhythmic vitality and sudden changes in mood. The second movement foils the electric atmosphere by plunging us into an eerie world of stasis. This is only a short interlude that introduces the luscious final movement. The music ebbs and flows in the glow of the C major sonority, pre-empting the picturesque water music of Liszt, Chopin and Debussy. The youthful vitality has given way to a more contemplative and philosophical ending.

### ***Piano Sonata in Bb minor Op 35 - Fryderyk Chopin***

The so-called "Funeral March" sonata is Chopin's first mature attempt at writing a piano sonata. The genre had almost been exhausted by previous composers like Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, leaving the 19th century composers with a difficult task of progressing the artform. But Chopin creates a truly original work with this sonata. All four movements form a whole like episodes of a fever dream, all dealing with the terror and tragedy of death. The first movement opens with a cold proclamation which spirals into a nightmarish whirlwind. This is quickly interrupted by a nostalgic vision which morphs back into the chaotic darkness. The second movement is a scherzo (or "joke") but there is rarely anything humorous about Chopin's scherzos. The movement opens with a macabre dance full of angst and anger. But Chopin cannot escape his true nature and writes a charming little waltz in the middle of the movement to foil the cacophony of the rest of the sonata. The third movement is the sonata's namesake and is the most prolific funeral march in popular culture. The final tolls of the church bells signify death's victory. In the middle of the movement there is a hopeful song, a prayer for life after death, that recedes back into the cold funeral march. The final movement manifests out of the cold ending of the march, like restless spirits stirring in the grave. It is the final flourish of the soul that dissipates into the afterlife.

## ***La Valse* - Maurice Ravel**

This work is largely considered to be one of Ravel's greatest, taking him 14 years to complete. Although unassuming in its name (literally just "The Waltz"), this piece is ripe with musical complexity and pushes the boundaries of what is possible on a piano. The piece is said to represent the rise and fall of the Viennese waltz, but this itself is a metaphor for the rise and fall of European culture around the turn of the 20th century. The music begins in darkness and from this emerges a dainty waltz, like a flower from a bed of dirt. The waltz swirls and grows until it becomes too large to contain and explodes into a cataclysmic climax. The piece ends in chaos; the dissolution of the waltz as a major form of entertainment and the rejection of Europe as the cultural centre of the world.