Kennesaw State University
School of Music

Junior Recital

Jordan Sommer, piano

Saturday, April 29, 2017 at 5 pm
Kathy Scott Rehearsal Hall
One-hundred Thirty-fourth Concert of the 2016-17 Concert Season
FRANZ LISZT (1811-1886)

*Liebesträume: Drei Notturnos*

I. Hohe Liebe  
II. Seliger Tod  
III. "O Lieb"

GEORGE GERSHWIN (1898-1937)

*Rhapsody in Blue*
program notes

Liebesträume: Drei Notturnos  |  Franz Liszt

Franz Liszt was a Hungarian virtuoso pianist, conductor, and composer during the Romantic era. His fame throughout Europe was the equivalent of modern-day celebrity musicians, with sold-out concerts, cheering audiences, swooning ladies, and swarms of people trying to obtain his disposed handkerchiefs and gloves. There was a term popularized during his tours that described the level of excitement he brought to audiences and fans – Lisztomania. His piano playing is legendary, and he was known to break piano strings from playing so intensely, which made it necessary to build more sturdy pianos and led to the innovation of an iron frame. Along with his spectacular skills as a pianist, he was a composer known for writing incredibly difficult pieces that he would perform at his concerts. He also wrote large orchestral works and introduced the concept of a "tone poem," which is a single-movement programmatic piece that portrays the story of a literary work. His music is an example of the important element of storytelling during the Romantic era.

Liszt’s Liebesträume, or "Dreams of Love," is a set of three Nocturnes for voice and piano based on poems by Ludwig Uhland (1787-1862) and Ferdinand Freiligrath (1810-1876), each describing passionate love with a beautiful collaboration of melody and accompaniment. The piano solo version was simultaneously written by Liszt to provide a more virtuosic expression of romance by the soloist.

The first Nocturne, subtitled "Hohe Liebe" (Exalted Love), describes a heavenly joy that is incomparable to anything on Earth. This piece has a gently-moving accompaniment that emulates a harp, and the melody sings above it with a soothing feeling of peace and reverie. Shimmering flourishes in the upper octaves of the piano depict Uhland’s text, "For over me, in golden distance / There opens a celestial sky." The music gently dies away as the harp arpeggios reach for the heavens.

The second Nocturne, "Seliger Tod" (Blissful Death), begins with two dramatic sighs as a love-struck man sinks into the arms of his beloved. He sings to her as he gazes into her eyes, and she responds to create a beautiful duet. As they sing together their passion intensifies, leading to
a moment in which it seems everything has faded away through blissful
death. Their love exists beyond the woes of worldly existence, and their duet
continues into the afterlife.

The third Nocturne, "O lieb'!" (O love!), is the most well-known of the
Liebesträume. The melody begins by singing Freiligrath's text, "O love! O
love, so long as e'er thou canst," and reminds us that one day we will no
longer be able to express our love. After a dream-like cadenza that also
emulates a harp, the melody returns with another message to love so long
as you can. This restatement of the melody leads to a much more passionate
cry, urging the listener to love as much as possible. A dramatic buildup leads
to an incredible climax that shatters into shimmering pieces, falling from the
heavens and slowly fading away. After what seems like another moment
of blissful death, the melody sings with a much calmer and saddened tone
reminding us all one last time, "O love, so long as e'er thou canst."

**Rhapsody in Blue | George Gershwin**

George Gershwin was an American pianist and composer during the early
Twentieth-Century. He began taking piano lessons at age ten, and his
first job was as a "song-plugger" for the Jerome H. Remick and Company
Publishing firm on New York City's "Tin Pan Alley." It was here that he had
his first exposure to publishing music, and he wrote several popular songs.
Along with his job at the Aeolian Company and Standard Music Rolls, this led
to his increasing popularity and exposed him to a great deal of new music
from the early 1900’s – especially jazz. In the 1920’s he collaborated with
lyricist Buddy DeSylva (1895-1950) to create the one-act jazz opera *Blue
Monday*. George and his brother Ira Gershwin (1896-1983) worked together
to write several Broadway musicals, from which there are many popular
standards, including "Fascinating Rhythm," "Embraceable You," and "I've
Got Rhythm." Among his many compositions and songs, the opera *Porgy
and Bess* and the orchestral works *Rhapsody in Blue* and *American in Paris*
are the most famous. Amid a very successful career, George Gershwin
unfortunately passed away in his mid-30’s due to a malignant brain tumor.

*Rhapsody in Blue* is Gershwin’s first composition for full orchestra, a single-
movement piano concerto, otherwise known as a rhapsody. It was written
in 1924, orchestrated by Ferde Grofé (1892-1972), and premiered at the
An Experiment in Modern Music concert in New York on February 12, 1924. Paul Whiteman (1890-1967) commissioned *Rhapsody* for this concert, and Gershwin was the soloist for the premiere performance. An important element of this piece is its fusion of classical music and jazz, combining the common practice of a piano concerto with jazzy melodies and rhythms. The original orchestration was for a jazz band, or "theatre orchestra," and it was later arranged for full orchestra. The piano solo version was arranged by Gershwin, and it was rewritten for the orchestral sections to be played by the soloist. *Rhapsody in Blue* established Gershwin as a professional composer. It is arguably one of the most important and popular works of American music.

about the musician

Jordan Sommer, a collaborative pianist and soloist at Kennesaw State University, is a devoted musician and teacher, exemplified through his work at school and with his students. As an artist, his purpose is to bring joy to others through the everlasting power of music.

Sommer’s studies at KSU have brought numerous solo performances, weekly accompanying opportunities, and increasing expertise working with singers and vocal repertoire. His work supporting vocalists led to award-winning performances at the 2016 National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) competition, and he performs regularly as pianist with both the KSU Wind Ensemble and Symphony Orchestra.

As a campus leader, Sommer has served in multiple positions for the KSU chapter of the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA). While serving as president, he arranged and hosted events including the 2016 Spring Recital and Winter Festival, and he was sponsored by the KSU School of Music to present at the statewide Georgia Music Teachers Association (GMTA) conference in Macon, Georgia.

An aspiring composer and conductor, Sommer has written, performed, and conducted his original works for solo piano, small ensembles, and full orchestra. In Spring 2017, he organized a concert titled “Blue Nocturne” to
feature himself performing several piano works, a composition of his own, and George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* with a full orchestra.

Outside of school, Sommer gives lessons through two different instructional companies. He is recognized as an inspirational teacher, receiving positive feedback for the energy and excitement he brings to his students.

Whether through performing as soloist or part of an ensemble, accompanying vocalists and instrumentalists, composing and conducting, or through teaching his students, Jordan Sommer is continuously committed to sharing the joy of making music.
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- Georgia Youth Symphony Orchestra and Chorus
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- KSU Faculty String Trio
- KSU Community and Alumni Choir
about the school of music

The School of Music at Kennesaw State University is an exciting place to live, work and learn. Housed in the College of the Arts, the School is infused with masterfully skilled and dedicated performing teachers who care deeply about their profession, our programs, our community, and every student involved in music and the arts. We are so excited about the musical and artistic events that happen here, and we are excited that you are here with us to enjoy them!

The School of Music is busy preparing our students to be productive artists. We want them to be accomplished and creative leaders of the arts world of tomorrow, professionals who are diversely trained and well-practiced. Diverse in their backgrounds, our students hail from many of the leading musical arts and honors organizations from across the Southeast, and as a School of Music, we are dedicated to the purpose of furthering the arts and cultural offerings to our region and beyond.

Please take the time to meet our faculty, students and staff. Interact with them, talk shop with them - their enthusiasm is contagious whether on or off the stage. I look forward to a long and rewarding relationship with you. With your continued support of music and the arts, there is nothing that we cannot accomplish together!

Stephen W. Plate, DMA
Director
KSU School of Music

connect with us

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