

A Piano Exhibition of Wor(l)dless Inner Pictures

Performer

Adriana Paler - Piano



Programme

Modest Petrovich Mussorgsky (1839-1881): Pictures at an Exhibition (1874)

Promenade

No. 1 "Gnomus"

Promenade

No. 2 "The Old Castle" (Il vecchio castello)

Promenade

No. 3 "Tuileries" (Dispute d'enfants après jeux)

No. 4 "Bydło" (Polish Cattle)

Promenade

No. 5 The Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks"

No. 6 "Samuel Goldenberg und Schmuyle" ("Two Jews: Rich and Poor")

Promenade

No. 7 "The Market at Limoges" (Le marché. La grande nouvelle)

No. 8 "The Catacombs"(Sepulcrum romanum)

Con mortuis in lingua mortua (With the Dead in a Dead Language)

No. 9 "The Hut on Hen's Legs (Baba Yaga)"

No. 10 "The Great Gate of Kiev" ("The Bogatyr Gates")

Programme Notes

Mussorgsky composed the Pictures in 1874 as a memorial to his friend, the Russian artist Viktor Hartmann, who had died at age 39. Shortly after the artist's death, Mussorgsky visited a retrospective exhibit of Hartmann's sketches, stage designs, and architectural studies and felt the need to capture the experience in music. By early summer 1874, he had completed the work, a lengthy and fiendishly difficult suite for solo piano.

Pictures is Mussorgsky's attempt to bestow immortality on Hartmann. Most of the works that inspired Pictures have been lost to the ravages of time; it is through Mussorgsky's music that they are remembered.

The suite consists of musical depictions of 10 paintings by Hartmann, interspersed with a recurring "Promenade" theme, or intermezzo, that represents a visitor—in this case, the composer himself—strolling through the exhibition.

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 "Cattle," a ponderous characterization of the lumbering of a large Polish ox cart.

The scampering fifth movement, "The Ballet of Unhatched Chicks in Their Shells," represents a costume design by Hartmann for a children's ballet. The sixth scene evokes an image of "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. The folksy and cheerful quality of the seventh movement, "The Market at Limoges," is neutralized by the eighth, "The Catacombs," which casts an eerie shadow with ominous chords and variations on the recurring intermezzo.

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 Great Gate of Kiev.” With a depiction of Hartmann’s sketch of a proposed city gate topped by cupolas in which carillons ring, Mussorgsky brings the piece to a majestic close.

Although originally composed in 1874 for solo piano, Pictures became better known in orchestral form, particularly as arranged by French composer Maurice Ravel in 1922. The work was also orchestrated by other composers, such as Sir Henry J. Wood (1918), Leopold Stokowski (1939), and Vladimir Ashkenazy (1982). In 1971 the British popular music group Emerson, Lake and Palmer devoted an entire album to their own art- rock interpretation of the piece. The texts of their imaginative cover evoke an unique connection between the unspoken melodies of the late 19th century captured by Mussorgsky and the dark associations of the progressive rock associations of the modern world:

More information and quotes from URL:

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Pictures-at-an-Exhibition> Access Date: April 26, 2021, and Musixmatch

Biography

Her talent, originality and determination led Transylvanian born pianist Adriana Paler from a small mountain village to the world capital of music, Vienna. Her fascinating stage presence, raw passion, artistic depth and brilliant sound brought her 27 competition prizes and dazzle audiences and critics worldwide. Adriana’s interpretation of Mozart got the 1st Viennese Classic Award at isa Baden, she played Kurtag for Kurtag in Budapest at his 90th birthday and excelled with Liszt and Mussorgsky in Puigcerda Festival (2018). She played in Romania, Austria, Hungary, Germany, Italy, France, England, Cuba, Spain, Croatia, Switzerland, Portugal and Luxembourg. The “brilliantly gifted” Austrian pianist is set to achieve new heights during the 2021-2022 season, which features live streams, recitals, concerts, and a recording project with works of Khachaturian, Liszt, Ravel, Mussorgsky, as well as guiding a class for Gifted Children at the University of Music and performing Arts Vienna.