



2026
DISTINGUISHED ARTIST RECITAL

ANTON NEL

PIANO

FEBRUARY 20, 2026
GREAT HALL
ST. MATTHEW'S CATHEDRAL
DALLAS

PROGRAM

Sonata in C major, Hob. XVI: 50 (1794-95)

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

- I. *Allegro*
- II. *Adagio*
- III. *Allegro molto*



Drei Klavierstücke, D. 946 (1828)

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

- I. *Allegro Assai*, in E-flat minor
- II. *Allegretto*, in E-flat major
- III. *Allegro*, in C major

INTERMISSION

Variations in E-flat on a theme by Rode, Op. 33 "La Ricordanza" (1822) Carl Czerny (1791-1857)



Four Russian Preludes

Prelude in G-flat major, Op. 16, No. 3 (1895)

Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915)

Prelude in C-sharp minor, Op. 34, No. 10 (1932-33)

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Prelude in C major, Op. 12, No. 7 "The Harp" (1914)

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Prelude in G major, Op. 32, No. 5 (1910)

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)



Andante spianato et grande polonaise brillante in E-flat major, Op. 22 (1830-1834)

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

ANTON NEL

Winner of Carnegie Hall's Naumburg International Piano Competition in 1987, Anton Nel tours internationally as a concerto soloist, recitalist, chamber musician and teacher. With a repertoire of more than 100 works for piano and orchestra, highlights of his U.S. career include performances with the Cleveland Orchestra and the Chicago, San Francisco, Dallas, Seattle and Detroit Symphonies. In addition to solo recitals in virtually every U.S. state, Anton has appeared at the Wigmore Hall in London, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Suntory Hall in Tokyo, and major venues in China, Korea, and South Africa. He also frequently performs as a harpsichordist and fortepianist. In demand as a chamber musician, he regularly appears with some of the world's finest instrumentalists and singers at festivals on four continents. Anton holds the distinguished Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long Endowed Chair in Piano at UT Austin's Butler School of Music, and gives an annual series of masterclasses at the Manhattan School of Music and the Royal Conservatory's Glenn Gould School in Toronto. During summers he's a member of the artist-faculties at the Aspen Music Festival and School, the Steans Institute at the Ravinia Festival, and the Orford Music Academy in Quebec. His recordings include four solo CDs, works for piano and orchestra by Franck, Fauré, Saint-Saëns, and the influential American composer Edward Burlingame Hill, and chamber music, including the complete Beethoven and Brahms works for piano and cello with Bion Tsang. Born in Johannesburg, South Africa, Anton is a graduate of the University of the Witwatersrand, where he studied with Adolph Hallis, and the University of Cincinnati, where he worked with Bela Siki and Frank Weinstock. Visit Anton online at antonnel.com.

NOTES

In 1795, at a young 63, **Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)** was completing the second of two triumphant trips to London. During his final visit to the English capital, he became acquainted with the brilliant young pianist Therese Jansen Bartolozzi, a student of Muzio Clementi, for whom Haydn composed three sonatas – the final three of his enormous output in the form. These sonatas were written for an English performer, and for one of the large English pianos of the day. These instruments, with extended keyboards giving the piano 'extra' notes, proved so much to Haydn's liking that he took one back to Vienna with him. For his Sonata in C major, Haydn skillfully balances his inheritance of the graces of Mozart and the tensions of C.P.E. Bach, though it is very much his own. No slave to formalism, in the first movement Haydn turns his back on conventional thematic contrast, and creates an amazing structure based essentially on the lean, witty theme that opens the piece. With dazzling inventiveness, he manipulates the idea with seemingly endless variety, derived from the malleable combination of its notes. Enriched, embellished and developed, passage follows passage with an air of spontaneity that belies the sophisticated art controlling and directing every element. Harmonic color is primary, particularly in the development section that begins in minor, finds its way to A-flat major, then to A minor, before returning home to C major. The slow movement, a piece Haydn already had in his portfolio, adjusted for its new sonata home, is an expressive, ornate Adagio. He attains eloquence through seemingly improvisatory means, but the illusion of fantasy is yet another measure of Haydn's sleight-of-hand. The last movement dances with Haydn's characteristic verve and humor — underscored by a rude cadence and a pregnant pause at the end of the first sentence. The movement is something of a miniature, but filled with Haydn's surprises and harmonic elegances, fully formed and satisfying. (from program notes by Orrin Howard for the Los Angeles Philharmonic)

To examine the last great period of **Franz Schubert's (1797-1828)** productivity, you must think in terms of months instead of years. In March of 1828, his final year, the only public concert in his lifetime to exclusively feature Schubert's music was held in honor of the first anniversary of Beethoven's death. The financial success of the evening gave the composer much-needed relief and inspired a burst of creativity, providing the richest musical legacy of his career. But the mounting ravages of syphilis brought Schubert's composing nearly to an end in August. By the middle of November, he was dead, not yet 32. The Three Piano Pieces of D. 946 were dated May 1828, left untitled and unpublished until they were collected by Brahms and anonymously edited in 1868. The first piece, in E-flat minor, features a recurring, restless, and foreboding leading section, interrupted by two different serene meditations. The second meditation was crossed out by the composer in his manuscript, but Brahms included these measures in his edition. The complete critical edition of Schubert's music, published in 1888, deleted Brahms' restoration, but few pianists pass up this haunting passage. The second piece, in E-flat major, reverses the order of the first piece, alternating a calm introduction with subsequent stormy measures, while the final piece, in a sunny C major, dances along in irregular phrases and folk-dance syncopations. (from program notes by Grant Hiroshima for the Los Angeles Philharmonic)

A student of Beethoven at the age of nine, and later a teacher of Franz Liszt, **Carl Czerny (1791-1857)** is mostly remembered for his keyboard études and exercises. Yet his catalogue of compositions lists 861 opus numbers, many of which are brilliant concert pieces. Aside from études and studies for the benefit of students, variations were perhaps Czerny's specialty. An introductory theme, followed by a set of musical variations based upon that theme, was the most popular music genre during Czerny's time, and he produced more of them than any other category. The popularity of variations had steadily grown, while its two distinct types, either continuous or clearly divided into sections, had been evolving since the sixteenth century. Variations were highly popular during Mozart's lifetime, and he produced eighteen sets of variations, based on themes that were simple and melodious. The popularity of variations remained high during Beethoven's time, who composed a total of twenty-two sets of variations and solidified the two forms into one. Mozart and Beethoven were Czerny's most significant predecessors, so it's not surprising that Czerny found variations to be of interest. Along with the rising popularity of pianos, a demand for new compositions made the variations format widely utilized, and some of Czerny's variations received high recognition at the time. For his Opus 33, Czerny chose a theme composed by the famed violinist Pierre Rode (solo violinist to Napoleon), which likely inspired him after he heard the great coloratura soprano Angelica Catalani (1780-1849) perform her own set of variations on the same theme. The title "La Ricordanza" (The Remembrance) may indicate that Czerny composed his version while reminiscing about Catalani's astonishing performance. Elegant, charming, increasingly difficult and extremely virtuosic in some of its passagework, this sparkling set of variations creates a brilliant concert piece.

Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915) was both an innovator and one of the most controversial composer-pianists of the early 20th century. The Great Soviet Encyclopedia said of him, “no composer has had more scorn heaped on him, or greater love bestowed.” Leo Tolstoy described Scriabin’s music as “a sincere expression of genius.” Before 1903, Scriabin was greatly influenced by the music of Frédéric Chopin, and he composed in a relatively tonal, late-Romantic idiom. Later, and independently of his influential contemporary Arnold Schoenberg, Scriabin developed a much more dissonant musical language that transcended usual tonality, but was not truly atonal. Called the “Russian Chopin” when he toured in the United States, Scriabin adored Chopin so much that he slept with a Chopin score beneath his pillow. The Prelude in G-flat major showcases Scriabin’s early romantic style, deeply influenced by Chopin, while hinting at his later, more individualistic voice. The relatively short piece lasts less than two minutes, filled with rich textures and expressive melodies. The work displays Scriabin’s signature beautiful lyricism, with a series of parallel sixths occurring throughout as both melody and accompaniment. Arpeggiated chords create a dreamlike atmosphere, and the use of syncopation in the middle section adds a touch of agitation, packing an emotional punch.

Dmitri Shostakovich’s (1906-1975) Prelude in C-sharp minor is the tenth in his set of 24 Preludes, Op. 34, which covers all the major and minor keys. This prelude is often considered a description of romantic love. The melody has been compared to Katerina’s aria from Act III of Shostakovich’s opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, and the song “For the First and Last Time” from his *Six Japanese Romances*, both works of a similar period and filled with romantic themes. Even without those associations, the prelude’s tenderly yearning melody and delicate trills suggest a romantic nature. The final bars, with widely separated C-sharps, are said to convey “ineffable and unassuageable longing.” The 24 Preludes were written during a period of significant artistic and political tension in the Soviet Union. Joseph Stalin’s autocratic Soviet regime increasingly favored classical styles and discouraged experimentation in the arts. Shostakovich, like other composers of the time, faced pressure to align his work with the principles of socialist realism, a style emphasizing accessibility and patriotic themes.

Serge Prokofiev (1891-1953) was a Russian composer, pianist and conductor, who later in his career worked in the Soviet Union. As the creator of acknowledged masterpieces across numerous music genres, he’s regarded as one of the major composers of the 20th century. His works include such widely heard pieces as the March from *The Love for Three Oranges*, the suite *Lieutenant Kijé*, the ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, and his much beloved *Peter and the Wolf*. In established forms and genres, Prokofiev created seven complete operas, seven symphonies, eight ballets, five piano concertos, two violin concertos, a cello concerto, a symphony-concerto for cello and orchestra, and nine completed piano sonatas. Prokofiev began his music studies at the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1904, where he took orchestration with Rimsky-Korsakov. Composed while he was a student, Prelude No. 7 “The Harp” from his *Ten Pieces* is more of a piano étude styled as a fantasia, free-flowing and filled with playful arpeggiations. With its broken chords, glissandi, and a traditional ABA-prime format (light, crystalline outer sections contrasting with more “spiky” material in the central section), the prelude is typical of Prokofiev’s neo-classical style.

The Russian composer, virtuoso pianist, and conductor **Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)** is widely considered one of the finest pianists of his day, and as a composer, one of the last great representatives of Romanticism in Russian classical music. Early influences of Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, and other Russian composers gave way to a thoroughly personal idiom, notable for its song-like melodicism, expressiveness, dense contrapuntal textures, and rich orchestral colors. The piano is featured prominently in Rachmaninoff’s compositional output, and much like his predecessor Franz Liszt, he used his skills as a performer to fully explore the expressive and technical possibilities of the instrument. His Prelude in G major is part of a set of thirteen preludes written during the summer of 1910 at his family’s home in the idyllic countryside of Ivanovka, a peaceful setting that undoubtedly influenced the work. The piece is known for its beautiful, somewhat impressionistic, G major sound, shifting to G minor in the middle section.

Frédéric Chopin’s (1810-1849) two-part *Andante spianato et grande polonaise brillante* was written between 1830 and 1834. The *grande polonaise* was composed first, in 1830-31, then the flowing introduction, marked *andante spianato*, was added in 1834. *Andante spianato* translates as “smooth and even” and the movement embodies that description. Hypnotically rippling arpeggios push the listener off onto a journey as if by water, providing the undercurrent for a gentle melody, tinged with nostalgia; there’s a pause at the bend of the stream for a brief chordal sequence before drifting off on the currents once more. The *grande polonaise brillante* announces itself with a heraldic fanfare, and adopts a stately attitude that allows plenty of room for virtuosic piano fireworks. Chopin was 20 years old and still living in his native Warsaw when he wrote the rousing *polonaise*, although he was about to depart permanently for Vienna and other parts of Europe. Ensnared in Paris a few years later, Chopin was invited to perform at a Paris Conservatory benefit, and he added his new *andante spianato* for the occasion. The combined work allows listeners to revel in a duality of experience, from the calming *andante spianato* to the technical pyrotechnics and satisfyingly triumphant finish of the *polonaise*. (from program notes by Rebecca Winzenreid for Camerata Pacifica)



Program notes and design by Jon White

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You are cordially invited to a Master Class with Anton Nel
featuring select pianists from the Meadows School of the Arts, SMU.

Saturday, February 21, 2:00 to 4:30 pm in the Great Hall. Free admission.

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