

UPCOMING ON THE PIANO SERIES

Saturday, October 12 at 7pm - Guest Artist: Yoonie Han
*performing works by Debussy, Theodore Wiprud, Liszt, Gluck,
and Liszt's transcription of Beethoven's 9th Symphony, Finale.*

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Piano Series Recital

Richard Cionco

SATURDAY, 7:00 P.M.
SEPTEMBER 21, 2019
CAPISTRANO CONCERT HALL

Musical Moments

"Harmonious Blacksmith" Variations	George Frederic Handel
Six Postcards (2008 - 14)	Richard Cionco (b. 1964)
Ice Cream on Walnut	
For Brno	
R Street	
Northcoast	
In Flight	
A Sunny Night	
Chant polonais "My Joys"	Chopin-Liszt
La lugubre gondola No. 2	Franz Liszt
Isolde's Liebestod	Wagner-Liszt

INTERMISSION

Six Musical Moments, Opus 16	Sergei Rachmaninov
Andantino	
Allegretto	
Andante cantabile	
Presto	
Adagio sostenuto	
Maestoso	

Mr. Cionco is a Steinway Artist

Pianist **Richard Cionco** - praised by Donal Henahan of the *New York Times* for his "*sensitive pianism*" - has performed as soloist with orchestras, as chamber musician, and as a recitalist on three continents. A Steinway Artist, Mr. Cionco is a graduate of the University of Maryland and The Juilliard School. Important chamber music performances include those at Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center, the Festival of New American Music in Sacramento, the Sulzbach-Rosenberg International Music Festival in Germany, the Schlern International Music Festival in Italy, and at the Orfeo Music Festival in Italy. Concerto appearances include those in Central Europe, Taiwan, throughout the U.S., and in Japan where his performance of Rachmaninov's *Piano Concerto No. 3* was aired live on television.

He has performed in recital in nearly every major U.S. city and his performances of Liszt's complete *12 Transcendental Etudes* have brought him rave reviews. Recently, he performed in L.A., Mendocino, Santa Rosa, and at Hunter College in New York City, New Mexico State University, the University of New Mexico, Kent State University, Florida State University, University of Alberta in Canada, Stetson University, Pensacola State University, the University of Florida, Auburn University, San Jose State University, the Chicago College of Performing Arts, the Great Music in Scarborough Series in New York, the University of Nevada Las Vegas, University of Nevada Reno, Tulane University in New Orleans, in Anchorage, AK, and dozens more. This year marks his fifth annual solo recital appearance at the Samsø Piano Festival in Denmark, and his fourteenth summer teaching and performing at the Orfeo Music Festival in Northern Italy.

Mr. Cionco has recorded solo and chamber music by Daniel Kingman for *innova records* and his first solo CD, *Latin American Music for Solo Piano*, on the Centaur Records label received rave reviews, notably by the American Record Guide. He has given master classes, lectures, recitals and has served as adjudicator in both China and Hong Kong. In 2012, he released a solo CD of Beethoven's late piano music, and a CD of music by American composer, Sunny Knable, both on the Centaur Records label.

Mr. Cionco was a Teaching Fellow for David Dubal at The Juilliard School for four years and is presently Professor of Piano at Sacramento State where he teaches, performs, and composes. His students perform in concerto, chamber, and solo appearances far and wide, and many have gone on to teach in private studios and at the college level.

motivic and harmonic combinations make this light-hearted piece a fun and interesting Rubiks-type experiment, although it is quite difficult to play. "Postcard for a Sunny Night" was written as a birthday gift for composer Sunny Knable, who is also an outstanding pianist and performer. It attempts a tranquil landscape, smoldering with colors.

La lugubre gondola is one of Franz Liszt's most important late works, written in 1882. Its genesis is well documented in letters from which we know that Liszt was Richard Wagner's guest in the Palazzo Vendramin on the Grand Canal in Venice in late 1882. Liszt may have had a premonition there of Wagner's death which inspired the first version of the work: a piano piece in written in December. This piece was recomposed the next month, in January 1883, and very shortly thereafter arranged for violin or cello and piano. The piano version was published in 1885, with minor changes (this version today is called *La lugubre gondola No. 2*). This was the only version of this piece published in Liszt's lifetime. Wagner did actually die in Venice, and his body was taken by gondola through the Grand Canal.

"Liebestod" is the title of the final, dramatic music from the 1859 opera *Tristan und Isolde* by Richard Wagner. It is the climactic end of the opera, as Isolde sings over Tristan's dead body. Liszt's rendition of the famous scene for the piano is, incidentally, the source of the title that we are so familiar with today, *Isolde's Liebestod* (Isolde's Love Death) – Wagner himself only spoke of Isolde's "transfiguration".

Six Musical Moments, Op. 16, is a set of piano pieces composed by Sergei Rachmaninoff between October and December, 1896, with each work reproducing musical forms characteristic of previous times. The forms that appear in Rachmaninoff's incarnation are the nocturne, song without words, barcarolle, virtuoso étude, and theme and variations. The individual pieces have been described as 'true concert works, being best served on a stage and with a concert grand.' Although composed as part of a set, each piece stands on its own as a concert solo with individual themes and moods. The pieces span a variety of themes ranging from the somber funeral march of number three to the majestic canon of number six. Although he usually premiered his own work, there is no record of him playing this set, and the date of the first performance remains unknown.

"The Harmonious Blacksmith" is the popular name that has stuck to the final movement ('Air and Variations') of Handel's Suite number 5 in E major, HWV 430, for harpsichord. It belongs to the set of his first eight harpsichord suites published in 1720 shortly after leaving his native Germany the same year to accept his new position at the Royal Academy of Music, London. But Handel himself did not give this particular movement its nickname. It gained currency only in the nineteenth century. Several theories therefore abound.

One version claims that Handel had once taken shelter from the rain in a smithy, and the sound of the hammer striking the anvil and got the inspiration for the tune. The 'proof' of this is the regular repeated 'pedal' note in the first variation, which is said to give the impression of a blacksmith hammering away. A slight 'variation' on this story is that Handel heard the blacksmith in the smithy humming the tune of the Air and incorporated it into his composition. Handel was known to 'recycle' melodies he came across in real life, so this sounds plausible as well.

But it is now believed that neither of these stories is true. In his 1836 book 'Reminiscences of Handel', Richard Clark fabricated this neat story, even going to the extent of finding an old anvil in a smithy near Whitchurch, Edgware, and identifying one William Powell as the fictitious blacksmith.

Richard Cionco's *Six Postcards* is a set of short pieces for solo piano that dates from 2008-14. A different set of *Six Postcards* exists for cello and piano, of which two, "Northcoast" and "In Flight", use the same material as their solo counterparts. "Ice Cream on Walnut" was written for my friends at Eskaton Village on Walnut Avenue in Carmichael, CA. Its flavor is high-spirited and optimistic. "Postcard for Brno" was composed for the 100th Anniversary Celebration of Rudolf Firkusny, in April 2012, which took place in Brno, Czech Republic and was sponsored by the Czech government. It suggests the styles of the Czech composer, Leos Janacek, who was Mr. Firkusny's teacher for eight years, as well as Americans Gershwin and Bernstein. "R Street" was composed for pianist Erina Saito. The idea came while dining on R Street in Sacramento and was written in just a few days with an intended rhythmic complexity and harmonic flair, suggesting a Latin flavor. "Northcoast" is the shortest in the set having been written as an encore for a concert in Mendocino, CA. It is suspended, brooding, and dark. "In Flight" began life on an airplane. Its