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PERFORMING ARTS SERIES

P R E S E N T S

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# *Iyad Sughayer, Piano*

FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 2025

7:30 PM

MAHANEY ARTS CENTER, ROBISON HALL



# *Iyad Sughayer, Piano*

## *Program*

**Adagio in B Minor, K. 540** (1788)

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

(1756–1791)

**Drei Klavierstücke, D. 946** (1828)

**Franz Schubert**

(1797–1828)

I. Allegro assai

II. Allegretto

III. Allegro

 *Intermission* 

**Six Impromptus, Op. 5** (1893)

**Jean Sibelius**

Impromptu No. 1 in G Minor (Moderato)

(1865–1957)

Impromptu No. 2 in G Minor (Lento – Vivace)

Impromptu No. 3 in A Minor (Moderato, alla marcia)

Impromptu No. 4 in E Minor (Andantino)

Impromptu No. 5 in B Minor (Vivace)

Impromptu No. 6 in E Major (Comodo)

**Piano Sonata in E-flat Major** (Rev. Version 1976–78) **Aram Khachaturian**

I. Allegro vivace (1903–1978)

II. Andante tranquillo

III. Allegro assai — Pesante maestoso, ma a tempo — Grandioso —  
Prestissimo — Poco sostenuto



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## ***Program Notes***

### **MOZART Adagio in B Minor, K. 540**

*Note by the score publisher, with additional content courtesy of San Francisco Performances.*

The Adagio in B Minor, K. 540, is a composition for piano solo by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. He entered it into his Verzeichnis aller meiner Werke (Catalogue of all my Works) on 19 March 1788. At 57 measures, the length of the piece is largely based on the performer's interpretation, including the decision of whether to do both repeats; it may last between 5½ and 16 minutes. The key of B minor is very rare in Mozart's compositions; it is used in only one other instrumental work, the slow movement from the Flute Quartet No. 1 in D Major, K. 285. The Austrian composer and academic Gerhard Present has made an arrangement for string quartet in four movements Fantasy Quartet in D in which this piece acts as the third one.

This brief Adagio is one of Mozart's least-known works for solo piano—and one of his finest. He wrote it on March 19, 1788, during what must have seemed a period of numbing transition for the 32-year-old composer. He had worked for most of the previous year on Don Giovanni, but that opera—successful at its Prague premiere—had not won over the Viennese so readily, and now Mozart was beginning to sense that his position in his adopted city had deteriorated. His financial situation was increasingly precarious, and that summer would come moves to cheaper apartments and painful appeals to friends for assistance.

The Adagio is dark and expressive music, yet one needs to be extremely careful about making easy connections between this music and the details of Mozart's life. Someone once observed that Mozart would no more consider writing music about how he was feeling than he would consider writing music about what he had had for breakfast; the features of his own life were not the subject of his art. We know virtually nothing about the background of the Adagio or why Mozart wrote it.

What we can feel is the greatness of the music itself, and critics have made some staggering claims on its behalf. Alfred Einstein called the Adagio "one of the most perfect, most deeply felt, and most despairing of all his works," while Arthur Hutchings named it "Mozart's finest single work for solo piano." Yet this music is difficult to describe. One can speak (accurately) of its chromatic writing, surprising dynamic contrasts, unusual leaps across the range of the keyboard, and lean textures without ever getting at the intense quality of this music or at its curious fusion of bleakness and grace. Rather than trying to make tempting connections between Mozart's life and his art, it is far better to take this brief Adagio for what it is: some of the most expressive music Mozart ever wrote.

## **SCHUBERT Drei Klavierstücke, D. 946**

*Note courtesy of the L.A. Philharmonic.*

When discussing the last great period of Schubert's productivity, you cannot talk in terms of years. You must talk in terms of short months. In March of his final year, 1828, the only public concert in the composer's lifetime to feature exclusively Schubert's own music was held in honor of the first anniversary of Beethoven's death. The financial success of the evening gave the composer a much-needed monetary respite, and an ensuing burst of springtime creativity would leave us with the richest musical legacy of his career. But it would not last long. The ravages of syphilis brought his composing nearly to a halt in August. By the middle of November, Schubert was dead, not yet 32.

The three piano pieces of D. 946 were dated May 1828, but left untitled and were not published until they were collected and edited by Brahms (anonymously) in 1868. The first, in E-flat minor, features a recurring, restless, and foreboding leading section interrupted by two different serene meditations. The second of these was deleted by the composer in his manuscript, but Brahms restored the bars in his first edition. The complete critical edition published by Breitkopf & Härtel in 1888 chose to abandon the restoration, but few pianists are willing to pass up this haunting passage. The second piece, in E-flat major, reverses the order of the first, 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.

## **SIBELIUS Six Impromptus, Op. 5**

*Courtesy of Naxos Records*

The Finnish composer Jean Sibelius was born the son of a doctor, in a small town in the south of Finland. The language and culture of his family, as with others of their class and background at the time, was Swedish. It was at school that Sibelius was to learn Finnish and acquire his first real interest in the early legends of a country that had become an autonomous grand duchy of the Tsar of Russia in the period after the defeat of Charles XII of Sweden at Poltava in 1709. Throughout the later 19<sup>th</sup> century there was division between the Swedish-speaking upper classes and the Finnish-speaking people the cause of the latter embraced by influential nationalists and accentuated by the repressive measures instituted by Tsar Nicholas II, before the revolution of 1905.

The musical abilities of Sibelius were soon realized although not developed early enough to suggest music as a possible profession, until he had entered university in Helsinki as a law student. His first ambition had been to be a violinist. It later became apparent that any ability he had in this respect—and here his own violin concerto would have offered insurmountable technical difficulties for him—was far outweighed by his gifts as a composer, developed first by study in Helsinki with Martin Wegelius, then with the pedantic Becker in Berlin and with Goldmark, and more effectively, with Robert Fuchs in Vienna.

In Finland once more, Sibelius won almost immediate success in 1892 with a symphonic poem, *Kullervo*, based on an episode from the Finnish epic, the *Kalevala*. There followed compositions of particular national appeal that further enhanced his reputation in Helsinki, including the incidental music to the student patriotic pageant *Karelia*, *En Saga*, and the *Lemminkäinen Suite*. During this period Sibelius supported himself and his wife by teaching, as well as by composition and the performance of his works, but it proved difficult for him to earn enough, given, as he was, to bouts of extravagance, continuing the practice of his days as a student. In 1896 he was elected to the position of professor at the University of Helsinki, but the committee's decision was overturned in favor of Robert Kajanus, the experienced founder and conductor of the first professional orchestra in Helsinki. As consolation for his disappointment, Sibelius was awarded a government stipend for ten years, and this was later changed into a pension for life. The sum involved was never enough to meet his gift for improvidence, inherited, perhaps, from his father who, at his death in 1868, had left his family bankrupt.

For the last 25 years of his life Sibelius wrote nothing, now isolated from and largely antipathetic to contemporary trends in music. His reputation in Britain and America remained high, although there were inevitable reactions to the excessive enthusiasm of his supporters. On the continent of Europe he failed to recapture the position that he had earlier known in pre-war Germany, in France, and in Vienna. He died in 1957 at the age of 91.



In common with other composers of the period, Sibelius might have expected to find a commercial market for his piano music, particularly for sets of short pieces suitable for domestic performance. Although his writing for the piano is seldom idiomatic, he composed a number of works for the instrument, the first from the 1880s unpublished, as was the last set of pieces, written in 1929.

The first to be published, in 1893, were the Six Impromptus, Opus 5, issued in the same year as his well-known *Karelia Suite*. Impromptu No. 1 in G minor, marked Moderato, has an introduction of solemn chords, leading to a solemn theme in the lower register. Impromptu No. 2, also in G minor, has a brief slow introduction, leading to a Vivace dance with a contrasting G major section. Impromptu No. 3 in A minor is marked Moderato (alla Marcia). Set over a repeated bass pattern, it has a gentler F major trio section over pedal notes. The E minor Impromptu No. 4 is in a mood of gentle melancholy, suggesting a folk song. Vivace arpeggios characterize Impromptu No. 5 and the set ends with Impromptu No. 6 in E major, marked Commodo. Again, there is a repeated bass pattern, accompanying a wistful melody.

### **KHACHATURIAN Piano Sonata in E-flat Major (Revised Version)**

*Courtesy of Sughayer's album Khachaturian: Piano Works on BIS Records.*

Born in Tbilisi on June 6, 1903, Aram Khachaturian became the most significant 20<sup>th</sup> century musical figure in the then Soviet Republic of Armenia. He studied cello at Moscow's Gnesin Institute during the years 1922–25, from

which came his earliest known works; and composition with Reinhold Glière until 1929. He later studied at Moscow Conservatory with such figures as Nikolai Myaskovsky until 1936, having been accepted into the Composers' Union four years earlier. Despite a hiatus that resulted from his denunciation as part of the 'Zhdanov Decree' in 1948, he retained a leading role in Soviet musical life, serving as deputy chairman of the Composers' Union's organizing committee during the years 1939–48 and as secretary from 1957 until his death. He enjoyed the friendship of numerous cultural figures inside and outside the Soviet Union, touring widely after 1950 as a conductor and making various recordings of his music (including several with the Vienna Philharmonic and London Symphony Orchestras). His 70<sup>th</sup> birthday was widely celebrated on both sides of the Iron Curtain, during which year he was made *Hero of Socialist Labour*. Khachaturian died in Moscow on May 1, 1978.

Although Khachaturian was a comparatively late starter as a composer, many of his most important works date from the first half of his career. These include three symphonies (1934, 1943, and 1947); concertos for piano, violin, and cello (1936, 1940, and 1946); and the ballets *Gayaneh* (1942) and *Spartacus* (1954). Thereafter his conducting and administration duties afforded considerably less time for composition, though mention needs to be made of the Concerto-Rhapsodies for violin, cello, and piano (1961, 1963, and 1968), as well as his solo sonatas for cello, violin, and viola (1974–76) which also marked his belated return to chamber music. He left numerous works for piano, together with many scores for theatre and cinema—the suites from which, together with those from his ballets, helped keep his name alive in the concert hall. What was

not in doubt is the sheer expressive immediacy of his music, indelibly conditioned by his Armenian heritage with its sensuous melodic writing, its vibrant but always resourceful orchestration and its elemental rhythmic drive—all resulting in a popularity equaled by few composers of his generation.

Certainly, there is no more impressive demonstration of Khachaturian's composing than in his Piano Sonata, written in 1961, which received its first performance at Moscow's Central House of Composers on November 9, 1962. Various front-rank pianists soon took up this piece, not least Emil Gilels, but Khachaturian already seemed to have been having doubts as to its overall length. Various cuts were indicated, with a more methodical revision carried out during 1976–78 prior to republication. Tonight, Iyad Sughayer plays the work as Khachaturian left it before his death. Although nominally in E-flat major, there is a strong pull toward A minor, so anticipating the ultimate outcome of C major. The dedication is to the memory of Khachaturian's teacher Nikolai Myaskovsky.

The opening movement plunges straight in with a careering theme high in the right hand, presently taking on a bracingly sardonic character. At length, the activity eases into a second main idea of plaintive agitation, but this barely establishes itself before the music heads into a sustained development of no mean virtuosity, only gradually subsiding into a more extensive and poignant reprise of that second theme. From here, the initial theme resumes its course in much the same manner as before, driving forth towards a peremptory though decisive coda.

The central movement opens with a wistful rhythmic pattern which is soon expanded into a gently musing theme, again in the upper reaches of the right hand. This continues to evolve as it touches upon more agitated expression, suddenly advancing into a powerfully declamatory statement across the extent of the keyboard. Dispersing with haste into a limpid transition heard in both hands in parallel, the main theme gradually re-emerge—but now with a more ambivalent undertone that becomes explicit in the forceful gesture in its very last bars.

The final movement commences even more viscerally than did the first, its motoric rhythms underpinning a combative theme that finds contrast with a more inward yet no more tranquil theme which builds to a climax of hectoring chords. Dying down in pensive uncertainty, the music now draws on both themes in a wide-ranging development that gradually finds its way back to the initial theme, which duly unfolds as part of an intensified reprise. This culminates in a powerful apotheosis whose defiance is maintained through to the fateful closing chords.





## *Artist Biography*

### **Iyad Sughayer, Piano**

Chosen as “One to Watch” by *International Piano* magazine, Iyad’s debut album *Khachaturian: Piano Works* for BIS Records was described by *Gramophone* as “exhilarating and delivered with perfect clarity” and “an outstanding debut” by *BBC Music Magazine*. Iyad’s second recording for BIS with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales conducted by Andrew Litton was released to critical acclaim in autumn 2022.

Nominated as a 2022 “Rising Star” by Classic FM, Iyad was a prize-winner at the Young Classical Artists Trust international auditions in 2021.

During the 2024–25 season, Iyad will make his debut in Bogota in Colombia, as well as undertaking his first professional tour of North America, including debut recitals in Toronto, Middlebury College Vermont, University of South Florida, Northeastern College in California, and in Washington, DC.

Previous season highlights included a return to the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, performances at the Berlin Konzerthaus, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Barber Institute Birmingham, and a series of recitals at the Leicester International Music Festival performing the complete Mozart Piano Sonatas alongside newly commissioned pieces inspired by those great works.

Iyad has also performed in recital at the Bridgewater Hall & Stoller Hall in Manchester, Leeds Town Hall, Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham International Piano series, Perth Concert Hall, Wigmore Hall in London, the Laeiszhalle in Hamburg, Festival Musique D’Abord in France, and the Brighton, Bath, and Lake District Summer Music Festivals in the UK, among others.

As a concerto soloist, Iyad has appeared with leading orchestras including the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, Manchester Camerata, European Union Chamber Orchestra, and the Cairo and Amman Symphony Orchestras.

Iyad also regularly collaborates with oboist Armand Djikoloum, with the pair due to undertake a tour of Scotland in Winter 2024. Previous appearances include concerts at the Lammermuir, Lichfield and Thaxted Festivals respectively.

In 2022 Iyad co-founded and launched a new specialist music school, the Mashrek Academy of Music, with the Mashrek International School in Amman. The Academy welcomes students from across Jordan, discovering and nurturing a new generation of creators and musicians.

In 2020 he contributed to a BBC Arabic documentary “London Lockdown”, in which he took part as a character and recorded the soundtrack for the music.

Born in Amman, the Jordanian-Palestinian pianist studied at Chetham’s School of Music, the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM), and Trinity Laban

Conservatoire of Music and Dance where he won the College's prestigious Gold Medal. Iyad completed his International Artist Diploma at the RNCM in 2019, and in the same year, became a City Music Foundation Artist. In 2021 he was made an Associate of the Royal Northern College of Music (ARNCM).

Iyad Sugahyer is presented in partnership with the Young Classical Artists Trust.

<https://www.ycat.co.uk/>





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