

John & Nancy Lambert present  
**ALESSANDRO MARANGONI**

SECU Auditorium @ North Carolina Museum of Art  
February 23, 2025

**Alessandro Marangoni – piano**

**Rossini & Chopin: A Romantic Dialogue**

**Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868)**

- *Prélude inoffensive* (Inoffensive prelude)

**Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849)**

- Ballade No. 1 in G minor, Op. 23

**Gioachino Rossini**

- *Petite Polka Chinoise* (Little Chinese Polka)
- Thème et Variations (First U.S. performance)

**Frédéric Chopin**

- Nocturne in C-sharp minor, Op. posth.

**Gioachino Rossini**

- *Échantillon du chant de Noël à l'italienne*  
(Samples of Italian Christmas Carols)
- Barcarolle

— Intermission —

**Frédéric Chopin**

- Scherzo No. 2 in B-flat minor, Op. 31

**Gioachino Rossini**

- *Une caresse à ma femme* (A hug to my wife)
- *Les raisins: À ma petite perruche*  
(Grapes, to my little parakeet)

**Frédéric Chopin**

- Andante spianato & Grande Polonaise brillante, Op. 22

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Born in Italy in 1979, Alessandro Marangoni studied the piano obtaining a diploma with honours and continuing his studies at the Scuola di Musica di Fiesole with Maria Tipo and Pietro De Maria. He graduated with honours in Philosophy at the University of Pavia as a student of the Almo Collegio Borromeo.

Alessandro Marangoni burst onto the international concert stage when he played at Teatro alla Scala in Milan, as pianist soloist during a tribute to the great Italian conductor Victor de Sabata, with Daniel Barenboim. Soon after he was signed as an international recording artist with Naxos.

His growing discography has received international critical acclaim for his interpretation and technique that fueled his meteoric rise on the concert stage in Europe, America and China. Notable and critically acclaimed collaborations have included appearances in Spain with the Malaga Philharmonic Orchestra, with the Granada Philharmonic and in Bratislava with Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra, all conducted by the Italian conductor

Aldo Ceccato. He has also appeared with the European Philharmonic and Mozarteum Kammerorchester and played as soloist in Great Britain, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, France, Sweden, Finland, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, China, USA and Australia.

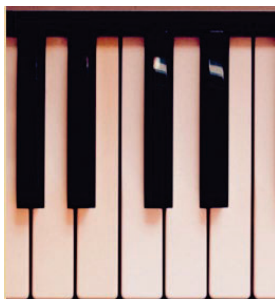
Marangoni recorded for the first time in the story the complete Péchés de vieillesse by Rossini (13 Cds), with 20 first world recordings. As a noted advocate of Italian music, he recorded also Clementi's Gradus ad Parnassum (4 cds) and Castelnuovo-Tedesco Piano Concertos with Malmo Symphony Orchestra, as well as Evangélion (first recording) and the complete cello and piano works with Enrico Dindo, Liszt's Via Crucis (Ars Cantica Choir, conducted by Marco Berrini), all on the Naxos label. He won the prestigious Abbiati Prize by the Italian Critics and the International Classical Music Awards (ICMA).

Manara, Massimo Quarta, Gabriele Mirabassi, Oleksander Semchuck, Paola Pitagora, Quirino Principe, Bruno Taddia, Milena Vukotic, il Quartetto di Fiesole e il Nuovo Quartetto Italiano.

He is the pianist of the Nuove Musiche Ensemble with whom he opened the celebrations of the bicentenary of Verdi's birth in Busseto in 2013. Acclaimed from the international press, some magazines like Ritmo and Musica dedicated a cover to Alessandro. Gramophone magazine choose his recordings as a landmark for Rossini's interpretation at the piano.

His energy and interest in new music and new technologies and pioneering spirit have led him to perform in cyberspace in avatar form for international audiences of computer gamers, to form artistic partnerships with artists from other disciplines (recently actress Valentina Cortese) and to launch a new project "Chromoconcerto" with Pierpaolo Venier. He collaborates with Edizioni Curci and Leduc.

Marangoni is the artistic director of Forte Fortissimo TV, a new Music Web Channel and he is international testimonial for the campaign "Music against child labour" of the International Labour Organization (ONU). He teaches at the Conservatory of Novara (Italy).

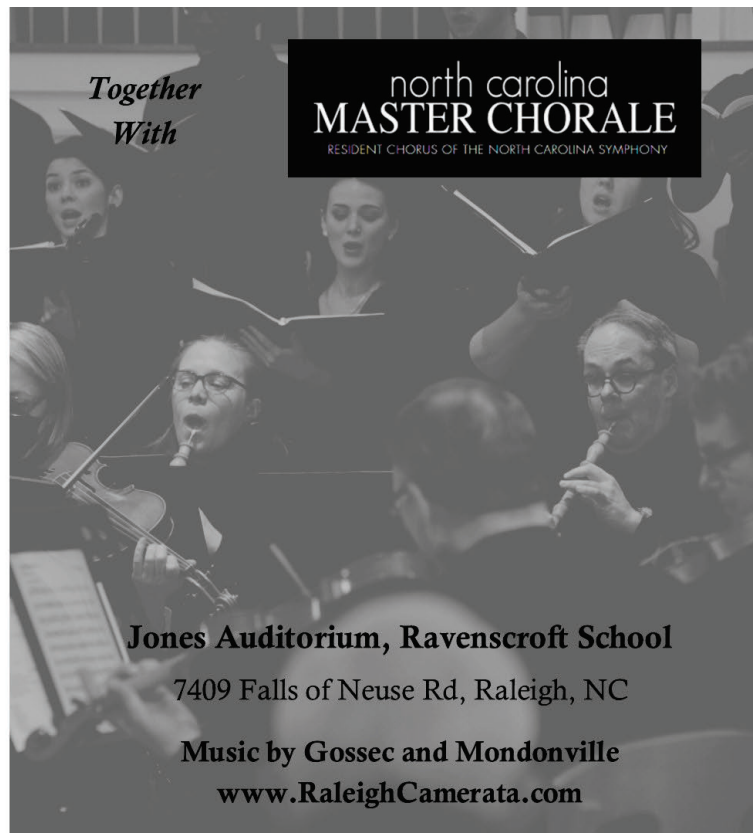


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## Selections from *Péchés de vieillesse*

Gioachino Rossini

1792-1868

One of the most prolific opera composers of all time, Gioacchino Rossini wrote an astonishing 38 operas, between 1810 and 1829, sometimes at a pace of three per year. Then, at age 38 he quit, following his opera *Guillaume Tell* which ran into trouble in the political atmosphere of the Paris Opera. Burnout was certainly one cause, but not the sole one; for many years the composer suffered from ill health, nursed by his long-time companion Olympe Pélissier, whom he eventually married after his estranged wife died. For the rest of his long life he concentrated on his avocation as a gourmet cook and grew appropriately in bulk. In 1855 he finally settled in a sumptuous villa he built in Passy, a suburb of Paris. There he experienced renewed energy and zest of life, reigning over a court of admirers.

Rossini was a contemporary of Beethoven and even made a visit to meet the great man; he knew the purveyors of German Romanticism, Carl Maria von Weber and Mendelssohn – who tried to arrange a performance of the *B minor Mass* for him in order to convert him to Bach; he witnessed the entire careers of his less long-lived Italian successors, Bellini and Donizetti in Italy, as well as those of Meyerbeer and Auber in Paris; and in 1860 he had entertained and debated musical aesthetics, including the Music of the Future (*Die Musik der Zukunft*) with Richard Wagner, of whose *Lohengrin* he once remarked, “...how is it possible that a people that produced a Mozart can begin to forget him for a Wagner?”

During his long retirement, he composed only sporadically and, except for church music, mostly small works, salon music he tossed off for the entertainment of his friends and dinner guests. He published 150 musical miniatures in 14 collections that he called *Péchés de vieillesse* (Sins of old age). Most of these works were humorous, with tongue-in-cheek titles. The collection includes works for solo piano, various small instrument combinations and vocal works.

### Ballade No. 1 in G minor, Op. 23

Frédéric Chopin

1810-1849

Born and raised in Warsaw, Chopin was hailed as the Polish and by the age of 20 seemed well on the road to become Poland's national composer. Perhaps most important, however, was that his teachers at the Warsaw Conservatory appreciated his genius and refrained from forcing him into a rigid academic mold. He was allowed to concentrate exclusively on pianistic composition and to integrate Polish instrument combinations folk idioms into his music.

After the collapse of the Polish revolution against Russia in 1830, he went into exile to France, never to return. Nevertheless, he put his homeland on the musical map with a corpus of innovative piano compositions that expanded the formal, harmonic and emotive vocabulary of the instrument. He quickly achieved brilliant success as a composer teacher and pianist, becoming a favorite at the salons of the aristocracy; but he disliked and later avoided performing in public, having neither the emotional nor physical stamina for it. Admired by the leading composers of his day, including Liszt, Schumann and Bellini, he was both artistically and financially secure.

Among the most important of Chopin's compositions are his four Ballades. Composed mostly in Paris between 1831 and 1843, they were not written as a set, nor do they follow any common formal structure. The title “ballade” was Chopin's invention, and there is some disagreement about exactly what the term relates to. Generally described as narrative in character, the ballades are thought to be based on the German literary ballade. Some scholars believe that they may have been inspired by the ballad poetry of the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz. Certainly, there is no overt literary reference in any of the four.

Chopin started composition of the G minor Ballade in Vienna in 1831 and completed it in Paris in 1835. He dedicated it to Baron Stockhausen, the Hanoverian Ambassador to France. The introduction opens ponderously, but rises hesitantly, as if posing a question, before the light, arch-shaped main theme appears. The theme is developed through a vast range of moods, but mostly gentle and hesitant, erupting unexpectedly in a triumphal, almost violent denouement. A snippet of the introduction appears at the end of the coda as a reminder of the somber beginning.

### **Nocturne in C-sharp minor, Op. Posth.**

Frédéric Chopin

In the 1830s the nocturne was a relatively new musical form, invented around 1812 by Irish composer John Field. His 18 nocturnes are usually gentle and meditative in character, transferring to the piano the broad *cantilena* style of Italian opera.

Chopin was familiar with Field's nocturnes and used them in his teaching. He also composed his own nocturnes, but in his hands its scope was expanded and it became a vehicle for delicate and subtle poetic expressions and more dramatic intensity than would be suggested by the title. As in all his other forms, Chopin used the nocturne to extend the expressive powers of the piano without the constraints of a fixed structure.

Chopin composed the Nocturne in C-sharp minor in 1830, just before he left Poland, never to return. He sent a copy of it in a letter, now lost, to his family from Vienna at the end of the year, and another one in 1836 to Maria Wodzinska, to whom he was engaged for a short time (The family disapproved and nixed the match.) It was finally published in 1875, long after the composer's death.

The character of the work is clearly indicated by the direction on the score, *Lento con gran espressione*. The nocturne contains self-references from the F minor Piano Concerto (No. 2) and the song *Zyczenie* (The Wish). The 1875 publication was not based on Chopin's original manuscript but from a copy, made (and probably "adapted") by his sister. It contained the following spurious inscription: "For my sister Louise to play before she practices my second concerto."

The melodic and harmonic simplicity of this Nocturne reveals its early date of composition. It is a simple ABA song form, but the change of mode in the middle section and the ornamented repeat of the first section are reminiscent of the *da capo* aria, the standby of the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century opera.

### **Scherzo No. 2 in B-flat minor, Op. 31**

Frédéric Chopin

In the days of the early Baroque, the term *scherzo* (joke) denoted a light-hearted vocal piece – as in the *Scherzi musicali* of Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643). Beethoven firmly established the form as a substitute for the traditional minuet and contrasting trio movement of the classical symphony and sonata, from which it derived its fundamental structure and repeat patterns.

By 1831, four years after Beethoven's death, when Chopin composed the first of his scherzi, the form was already firmly entrenched. Chopin was one of the first composers, however, to use the term *scherzo* for an independent instrumental composition. And, while retaining the basic structure of the traditional *scherzo*, gone are the remnants of its dance origins. But his four scherzos are anything but light or joking. Robert Schumann commented "How is 'gravity' to clothe itself, if 'jest' goes about in dark veils?" In fact, we should not take the title too seriously; it falls within a large category of single-movement piano works with such non-specific titles as "impromptu," "moment musical," "ballade" or "bagatelle."

Composed in 1837, the B-flat minor Scherzo is the most dramatic of the four, consisting of a stormy *scherzo* section framing and contrasting with a tranquil trio. The *scherzo* proper contains two thematic ideas, opening with four mysterious bars, followed by a powerful statement, in which the pauses are dramatically as important as the notes themselves. The trio also contains two melodies.

### **Andante Spianato and Grande Polonaise Brillante, Op. 22**

Frédéric Chopin

Chopin's chosen medium was the piano as a solo instrument. In his late teens he had tried to combine piano and orchestra, but coordinating the two was difficulty for him. After age 20 he never again wrote for a large ensemble. In these early orchestral works, the orchestral scoring is so light that in the nineteenth century it was fashionable to re-orchestrate and "improve" the accompaniment. It is probable, however, that Chopin intended the orchestra to serve merely as a gauzy background fabric for the soloist. Moreover, because he himself was

known to have had a rather light touch on the piano, a heavy orchestral accompaniment would have drowned him out.

The *Andante Spianato and Grande Polonaise Brillante* is a hybrid work. Chopin had originally composed the Polonaise for piano and orchestra in 1830-31, adding the *Andante Spianato* for piano solo in 1834. He premiered the complete work at one of his last public appearances in Paris a year later. In 1838 he arranged the Polonaise for piano alone, the form in which it is frequently performed today.

The *Andante* is truly “*spianato*,” (smooth, even) with virtually no dynamic changes. The Polonaise, by contrast, is in Chopin’s early, more extroverted style. As with most works of this period, the most brilliant virtuosity is reserved for a grand climax in the last pages.



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Sunday, April 6 2:00  
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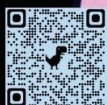
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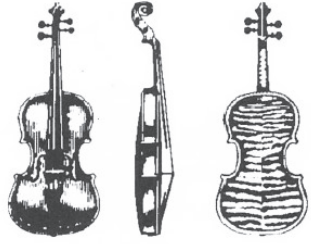
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Growing up in Raleigh, John Lambert has been attending CMR concerts since the mid-1950s when they were given at NCSU. He joined the board under the leadership of Jo Cresimore in the 1980s and helped to establish a membership database and a fundraising plan. Writing for Spectator Magazine, and later founding CVNC.org, he and his colleagues continue to provide comprehensive reviews of CMR and many other concert presenters. He has also served on the City of Raleigh Arts Commission and as a board member of Arts Access. In 1985, he was among the first recipients of the Raleigh Medal of Arts.

Following leadership positions with the Raleigh Oratorio Society (now the NC Master Chorale), the City of Raleigh Arts Commission and Arts Access, Nancy Lambert became Executive Director of CMR in 1995, a position she held until 2012. During this period, the organization experienced substantial growth, tripling its budget, expanding its programs, and increasing the donor base. Highlights included the partnership with the NC Museum of Art to launch the Sights and Sounds on Sundays series in 1999, the establishment of a new endowment in 2001, and inclusion of artists' mini-residencies with associated educational outreach activities. For 40 years of service to the arts community, she received the Raleigh Medal of Arts in 2012.

