

GCSU Department of Music

Faculty Recital

“Oh, The Humanity!”

Dr. Owen Lovell, piano

Dr. Kerry Neville, writer

Professor Laura Newbern, poet

Content/Trigger Warning: Performance contains adult language and themes including self-harm and eating disorders. Audience discretion is advised.

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

Max Noah Recital Hall, 7:30 p.m.

And Live-Streamed on [Facebook.com/GCMusicDepartment](https://www.facebook.com/GCMusicDepartment)



Program

“Oh, the Humanity!”

prelude

A Stutter (Iceland, 2013)

Ólafur Arnalds w/ Arnór Dan

performance

from “*The Hike to Fanore Beach*” (Georgia, USA 2023)

Kerry Neville

Prelude in B Minor, Op. 32 No. 10 (Russia, 1910)

Sergei Rachmaninov
(1873–1943)

“*The Lamps*” (Georgia, USA 2022)

Laura Newbern

Sonata in B-flat Major, D. 960 (Austria, 1828)

Franz Peter Schubert
(1797–1828)

I. Molto moderato

II. Andante sostenuto

III. Scherzo: Allegro vivace con delicatezza - Trio

IV. Allegro ma non troppo - Presto

from “*The Hike to Fanore Beach*” (Georgia, USA 2023)

Kerry Neville

(read prior to each movement below; hold applause until piece has finished.)

Sonata No. 7 in B-flat major, Op. 83 (Russia, 1942)

Sergei Prokofiev
(1891–1953)

I. Allegro inquieto

II. Andante caloroso

III. Precipitato

“*My Mother’s Sadness*” (Georgia, USA 2022)

Laura Newbern

Elegie in E-flat Minor, Op. 3 No. 1 (Russia, 1892)

Sergei Rachmaninov
(1873–1943)

postlude

In stiller Nacht (Germany, 1864/1894)

Johannes Brahms
(1833–1897)

Performer's notes

Why, "Oh, the Humanity"?

The title is a multifaceted play on words. Originally inspired by broadcaster Herbert Morrison's famous live coverage of the Hindenburg disaster in 1937, it can also be taken as a sign that various aspects of the human condition will be found within the performances. The program's title is also a personal plea to rekindle the humanity in all of us, something that seems scarce, since the events of 2020. Finally, the interdisciplinary nature of the program is, itself, a celebration of the humanities. Thank you for attending what is, for my performing career, an experiment. I can't thank Laura and Kerry enough for being willing to participate and contribute their personal selections, as readers.

Rachmaninov - Prelude, Op.32 No.10 in B minor

Brief history: This prelude, written in 1910, is one of two works the composer set, inspired by Swiss painter Arnold Böcklin. The painting that inspired this is, (translated) "The Homecoming", while another of Böcklin's paintings, called "Isle of the Dead," inspired an orchestral work of the same name. Though it lacks the technical fireworks and brooding tunefulness of some of its compatriots, the *Prelude in B minor* is said to have been the composer's favorite among the 24 preludes he wrote, over the course of his life.

Why I like it: The layering of sound on the first page, the absolutely tremendous buildup of the second page, the unsettled and improvised-feeling third page, and the last gasp at the end.

Philosophical rambling: The painting (I am an art lover) never did anything for me, though I've not seen it in person...and that can change one's impression. I waited too long to properly learn and perform it, as I've had a crush on this prelude, forever. For me, it is a look ahead. If this performance affects you, and you know me well enough, it's because many of you are in here, somewhere.

Schubert - Sonata in B-flat Major, D.960

Brief history: This four-movement leviathan of the piano literature is the last instrumental work Schubert wrote, composed in 1828 during the final months of his life when dying of syphilis at the age of 31. It is a life cycle in reverse, with the opening two movements depicting (in my mind) impending death, and then the moment of death. Unexpectedly, the last two movements are a much more youthful dance, followed by a very energetic finale in a rondo form.

Why I like it: I'm going to borrow a quote from a great pianist (and human being), Stephen Hough. "*The opening movement of the Sonata in B-flat Major goes beyond analysis. It is one of those occasions when the pen has to be set down on the desk, the body rested against the back of a chair, and a listener's whole being surrendered to another sphere.*" The only thing I'll add is the most special part of the movement is at the end of the development (for those of you familiar with sonata form); after a stormy and dramatic buildup in minor keys, typical for the style, we are suddenly swept into the heavens for the briefest and quietest moment of B-flat major, before being brought back to earth. The moment comes and goes in just seconds. Built very simply, the second movement is one of the most emotional moments in the piano literature. The way Schubert plays with dissonance and resolution, and then the harmonies and keys he passes through, are constantly unexpected and amazing. And it inspires me as a performer to try and do everything with subtleties of tone color and timing to communicate the true meaning of the movement to you. The most poignant moment lies at the end, a quiet modulation into C-sharp major, played as tenderly and sincerely as possible. The third movement is a dance, styled like a minuet and trio where the trio is a string quartet (another genre in which he wrote prolifically). In that moment, my left hand becomes a pizzicato cello. The fourth movement, for you Schubert lovers, reminds me of parts of his *Wanderer Fantasy*. After being introduced by a pesky octave, it is then set into quasi-perpetual motion, interrupted only by silence, or that pesky octave, yet again. It ends triumphantly, very much unlike where it began.

Philosophical rambling: I waited seven years to play this piece, because of how much I loved and respected and feared it. First, I learned many other Schubert songs for voice and piano, other smaller solo piano pieces of his, and another sonata. Only then, did I feel ready to try. It took a year and a half to learn the first time, my longest gestation period ever, for the lengthiest piece in my repertoire. So much of this sonata is harder to play than it sounds or looks, and the last movement is quite tiring, even on a good day. Many of the saddest moments in Schubert are in major keys. As a middle-aged person, I worry how close the fateful first movements are, to where I am in my life... and how many more times I get to live the youthful exuberance of the last two movements, before I don't get to, anymore. If you have never heard the second movement of this piece before, it is my honor to be able to share it with you.

Prokofiev - Sonata No.7 in B-flat Major, Op.83

Brief history: Completed in 1942, and part of the three "War Sonatas" for piano (#6, 7, 8), the seventh sonata is one of the harshest pieces Prokofiev wrote for solo piano.

Why I like it: The first movement is written in an acerbic, dissonant, and shocking style. Enough so, that the composer later needed to apologize for writing in this manner, to patriotism-obsessed Soviet authorities, in order to stay in the good graces of the government, and not be censored (or imprisoned, or worse). The second movement is reminiscent of the composer's ballet setting of *Romeo and Juliet* in its attempts at lyricism. However, the movement evolves to a place that makes even Shakespeare's romantic tragedy seem almost rosy by comparison, with an apocalyptic vision of humanity, utterly destroyed. The third movement of the sonata is what most listeners remember. Written in an odd time signature, and an unyielding rhythmic ostinato, it is a literal freight train ride into the abyss.

Philosophical rambling: This sonata takes a strong position in the argument over the purpose of art— is it to be beautiful, or is it to be honest? Prokofiev chooses the latter. Parts of the 1st and 3rd movements physically hurt to play, and it knocks the piano out of tune, but the 2nd movement is actually more intense, and harder to play well.

Rachmaninov - Elegy, Op.3 No.1

Brief history: Part of a set of five pieces dedicated to Anton Arensky, Rachmaninov's composition teacher, the Elegy is full of sorrow, regret, and mourning. This is contrasted with a middle section that attempts to depict a more positive, masculine reminiscence, but it is eventually subsumed by the emotions of the opening. This is the piece, immediately before his famous C-sharp minor Prelude (Op.3 No.2), a work he eventually grew to hate, because of its immense popularity, while touring as a performer.

Why I like it: I discovered the Elegy in early 1998, when a modern technological CD reissue was made of the composer's original player piano recordings. It was probably how a lot of American pianists, came to know of this piece's existence. The Elegy wears its heart on its sleeve; it's lovely enough to be memorable, but not so reverentially great that I feel guilty putting my own interpretive stamp, firmly upon it. I fell so hard for this piece at the time, that I tried to honor my teacher by learning it for my last lesson and studio class we would have together after 6 years at the conservatory. I learned the piece in just under a week (too soon), tried my best to memorize it (not enough time to do that properly, either), and exclaimed, "Look at this great piece I just found!" My very Russian teacher responded, "Oh yes, we all learned this one in the fifth grade." I will admit that stung...

Philosophical rambling: There is a couplet near the end of a poem called *Nocturne* by Nobel laureate and author, Louise Glück, that gets very close. But what this piece means to me, versus what it means to you, could (and maybe should) be entirely different.

Biographies


Pianist **Owen Lovell** has appeared as a soloist and critically acclaimed chamber musician in twenty U.S. states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, Canada, Mexico, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. Commercial releases include tracks with rock musician Kip Winger (2008, Frontiers Records) and ASCAP award-winning composer Randall Bauer (2016, Albany Records). Owen has performed in live broadcasts on Wisconsin Public Radio and Austin, Texas NPR affiliate, KUT-FM. He has worked with many prizewinning composers, most notably Lowell Liebermann, Michael Torke, Samuel Adler, Joan Tower, Dan Welcher, Eric Ewazen, David Maslanka, Denis Smalley, and Roberto Sierra. Owen maintains professional two-piano and violin and piano collaborations, delighting audiences in settings ranging from rural community churches to the Kennedy Center.

Dr. Lovell earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in piano performance from the Peabody Conservatory of the Johns Hopkins University, and holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Texas at Austin. His principal instructors included Boris Slutsky, Dr. Betty Mallard, Gregory Allen, and Julian Martin. Owen is an MTNA Nationally Certified Teacher of Music, serving actively on the executive board of its state and local affiliates, and is frequently in demand as a clinician and adjudicator throughout the United States.

Appointed in the fall of 2016, Dr. Lovell is an Associate Professor of Music and coordinates the keyboard area and Bobcat Keys after school program at Georgia College, the state's designated public liberal arts university. Additionally, he is a piano technician and the piano review editor for Larry Fine's Acoustic and Digital Piano Buyer (www.pianobuyer.com and printed semiannually), the standard consumer reference for piano shoppers. He previously served on the keyboard faculties of the University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire, the University of Texas - San Antonio, and Texas State University. Visit his personal website, www.owenlovell.com or his [YouTube channel](#) for more information and links to recordings.

Dr. Kerry Neville is an Associate Professor of English at Georgia College and the Coordinator of the Undergraduate and MFA Programs in Creative Writing. She is the author of two collections of stories, *Necessary Lies*, which received the G. S. Sharat Chandra Prize in Fiction and was named a *ForeWord Magazine* Short Story Book of the Year, and *Remember to Forget Me*. Her work has appeared in publications such as *The Gettysburg Review*, *Epoch*, *Triquarterly*, *The Washington Post*, *The Huffington Post*, and elsewhere. Her fiction and nonfiction have been named Notables in *Best American Short Stories* and *Best American Essays*. In 2018, she was a Fulbright Fellow at University of Limerick in Ireland, where she was Visiting Faculty in the MA in Creative Writing Program.

Laura Newbern comes from two long lines of Arkansans, was born in Germany, and grew up in Washington, D.C.. She's the author of *Love and the Eye*, selected by Claudia Rankine for the Kore Press First Book Award, and the recipient of a Writer's Award from the Rona Jaffe Foundation. Her poems have appeared in *The Atlantic*, *The Threepenny Review*, *The Georgia Review*, *Poetry*, and elsewhere; here at Georgia College she teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in creative writing and literature and serves as the Editor of the literary journal *Arts & Letters*.

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Jazz Band Concert
“Contemporary Jazz”
Cliff Towner, director
Thursday and Friday,
March. 9 and 10 7:30 p.m.
Russell Auditorium and
Live Streamed on FB

Guest Artist and Faculty Recital
Mikael Adon Darmani, piano
Bryan Emmon Hall, violin
Thursday, March 23, 7:30 p.m.
Max Noah Recital Hall and
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Orchestra Concert
Bryan Hall, conductor
Tuesday, March 28, 7:30 p.m.
Russell Auditorium and
Live Streamed on FB

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