

IN MEMORIUM

The Placitas Artists Series mourns the loss of Priscilla Sears, mother of current PAS Board of Directors member and website coordinator Deborah Gullo. Priscilla attended many PAS concerts with Deborah over nearly two decades and especially loved Spanish and flamenco guitar.

PAS also mourns the loss of Roxanne Bebee Blatz, wife of former PAS board member and current PAS volunteer Roger Blatz. Roxanne and Roger (a.k.a. Preston Photography) have displayed their work many times in the PAS visual arts exhibits at Las Placitas Presbyterian Church.

We encourage you to consider honoring their memory with PAS Endowment Fund donations in Permanent Memory of Priscilla Sears
and
PAS Endowment Fund donations in Permanent Memory of Roxanne Bebee Blatz.



“This project is supported in part by New Mexico Arts, a division of the Department of Cultural Affairs, and by the National Endowment for the Arts.”



December 15, 2019

3 p.m.

Las Placitas Presbyterian Church

Katie Mahan

Solo Piano

“An American in Paris”

Concert Generously Sponsored by

Claudia and Robert Moraga

and the Cates Team at RBC Wealth Management

and

Martha Ritchie

Program Notes

In 1781, **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** left Salzburg to work as a freelance musician in Vienna. He quickly established himself as the finest keyboard player in that city, and his abilities as an improviser were unsurpassed. His c minor fantasy and sonata, both composed in Vienna in 1785, are arguably his greatest works for piano. The *Fantasia in c minor, KV 475* is comprised of six contrasting sections full of brooding chromaticism, contrasting ranges, silences, and sudden dramatic changes of mood and tempo. The “Don Giovanni-esque” emotional mood and drama of the work foreshadow Beethoven’s “c minor mood.”

The *Sonata No. 32, Op. 111* is the last piano sonata composed by **Ludwig van Beethoven** and dates from 1821 to 1822. It is considered to be one of his greatest works for the piano and has been described as "a work of unmatched drama and transcendence ... the triumph of order over chaos, of optimism over anguish." (Robert Taub) The work is characterized by contrast: allegro and adagio, minor and major, earthly and spiritual, struggle and serenity, despair and hope. The first movement, in c minor, is full of drama, pathos, and struggle, depicted both musically and technically, as if describing Beethoven’s own personal struggle and despair. The movement ends, however, on a C major chord, as if Beethoven has come to rest. This leads into the second movement, where tension and drama are exchanged for unbridled joy, sublimity, and an eternity of serenity. The movement is also unique, if not visionary, in the composer’s incorporation of jazz-like elements in the third variation.

Claude Debussy started to compose his *Suite Bergamasque* in 1890, but did not finish the work until 15 years later. The inspiration for the work came from a poem by Debussy’s friend, the poet Paul Verlaine, titled “Clair de lune,” which speaks of idyllic landscapes and charming “masks and bergamasques.” Debussy had a lifelong fascination with the imagery of the Italian *Commedia dell’arte*, and Verlaine’s poem with its references to the lovesick Pierrot and the Venetian carnival appealed to Debussy’s imagination. The work is comprised of four movements: a lively *Prélude*, a playful *Menuet*, the beloved *Clair de lune*, and the staccato *Passepied*. The piece evokes the Baroque dance suites of Couperin and Rameau, for whom Debussy had great admiration.

In 1926, **George Gershwin** made a trip to Paris with the purpose of taking lessons with French composer Maurice Ravel. The lessons never became more than an exchange of ideas, but Gershwin subsequently invited Ravel to visit New York. That composer’s 1928 visit inspired Gershwin to return to Paris later that year in order to compose a new work inspired by, and based on, his impressions of the French capital. The jazz-influenced tone poem *An American in Paris* was the resulting composition, and evokes the energy, sounds, atmosphere, and excitement of Paris, just as *Rhapsody in Blue* does for New York City. Gershwin wrote of the work: "My purpose here is to portray the impressions of an American visitor in Paris as he strolls about the city, listens to the various street noises, and absorbs the French atmosphere."

Notes provided by Katie Mahan

“An American in Paris” Music for Solo Piano

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Fantasia in c minor, KV 475

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Sonata No. 32 in c minor, Op. 111

- I. *Maestoso: Allegro con brio ed appassionato*
- II. *Arietta: Adagio molto semplice e cantabile*

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Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Suite Bergamasque

- I. *Prélude*
- II. *Menuet*
- III. *Clair de lune*
- IV. *Passepied*

George Gershwin (1898-1937)

An American in Paris (Arr. by Katie Mahan)