

“The Grand Tour”
Senior Thesis Presentation
Bruce Leto, Piano; HC 2014

“Is there a portal, colonnade, or dome,
The pride of Naples, or the boast of Rome.
We raise it here...
Hence all our stucco’d walls, mosaic floors,
Palladian windows, and Venetian doors.”

James Cawthorn, *Of Taste* (Black, 174)

“Italy, and the spring and first love altogether
Should suffice to make the gloomiest person
Happy.”

The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell: 1872-1914 (1969)

“‘One doesn’t come to Italy for niceness,’ was the retort;
‘One comes for *life*. Buon giorno! Buon giorno!’”

E.M. Forster. *A Room With a View*

During the 18th-19th centuries, many upper class Europeans (predominantly British males) made journeys throughout Italy so that they might re-experience the Renaissance tradition and classical legacy of the region. “The classic Grand Tour[ist] was the wealthy, young man who spent several months — at least — traveling in Europe after finishing his formal schooling...[The Grand Tour] served as a hiatus between adolescence and adulthood, between formal schooling and working (Lynne Withey in *The Frugal Traveler*).” Composers and musicians were among those most influenced by Italian culture during the period of the Grand Tour. ‘Indeed, for many, the distinctive cultural goal of travel to Italy was not painting, sculpture, nor architecture but, instead, *music* (Black, 174).’ Musicians felt deeply inspired by Italian landscape, and the architecture and operatic tradition that originated in it. Sir Francis Head even described Italy in 1724 as “a *country of music* (Black, 179).” Thus, many composers including Mozart, Mendelssohn, Liszt, Poulenc, and Cacioppo, subsequently incorporated indelible aspects from different areas of Italy into their compositions.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart made three separate trips to Italy with his family in the early 1770's (Isacoff, 1). These trips, combined with inspiration from different Italian composers, influenced Mozart's *Piano Sonata No. 4 in E Flat Major*, K. 282. This piece represents northern Italy on the Grand Tour, and some of the slides that you will view during my performance of this piece were taken in the Alpine city of Vipiteno/Sterzing in northern Italy, where I participated in the Orfeo International Music Festival during the summer of 2011. Later on, Felix Mendelssohn sojourned in Italy during the 1830's and was notably inspired by the remarkable city of Venice (Kamien, 1). *Venetianisches Gondelleid Op. 30, No. 6* on my program will give you a taste of the romance and passion of Venice. Listen closely for the accented augmented chords that appear in this gondola song. Franz Liszt made several pilgrimages to Rome (between 1830 and 1860), and a letter written to fellow composer Hector Berlioz in 1839 reflects Liszt's belief in the power of Italian Art. "The beautiful, in this privileged country, appeared to me in the most sublime forms...Rafael and Michelangelo better helped me understand Mozart and Beethoven (Backus, 173)." Inspired by Renaissance artist Raffaello's depiction of the marriage between Joseph and the Virgin Mary, Liszt composed *Sposalizio*, which he insisted always be performed with the painting in sight. Notice the solemn expressions in Mary and Joseph's faces in this depiction, and pay special attention to the pentatonic colorations in this piece. French composer Francis Poulenc wrote his *Napoli Suite* in 1922 during an exhilarating trip to Naples and the Amalfi Coast. No doubt he was impressed by the seafaring vessels, the coastline, the ports and the Neapolitan manner. The first movement of this piece is a lilting, but also neurotic "Barcarolle", or boat song. The second movement, as its title and pictures from the slideshow suggest, is reminiscent of the Amalfi Coast at night. Finally, the third movement is a "Caprice" that derives its tempo from the "tarantella," a spirited Italian dance in compound triple meter.

More recently, Italian-American composer Curtis Cacioppo has traveled to many different parts of Italy from the Alps to Sicily. *A Violetta* is yet another gondola-inspired piece, livelier than the Mendelssohn, and in a contemporary C Major. *Epitaph* is a memoir written in honor of Curt's late friend Baron Ernesto Rubin de Cervin Albrizzi, who died on Good Friday of last year, and "whose magnanimity and insight will greatly be missed." Ernesto was a prominent Italian composer and teacher, acknowledged as the founder of the New Venetian School of composition, who resided in Venice and the Trentino. The middle "Dixieland" section of *Epitaph* alludes to their many conversations about American culture and politics. *Consolatio* is another of Cacioppo's masterpieces, written with the arid, desert-like climates of Sicily in mind – the overall tone of this piece is reflective of this. And finally, *Old Swedes* is, despite its title, a true "siciliano." The modes in this piece were inspired by the beautiful, tropical coast of Siracusa, and the Church of St. Lucy, which has as its counterpart the "Gloria Dei" Swedish church of Philadelphia. If you listen closely, you might be able to hear some quoting from the Italian folk song – "Santa Lucia." Sit back, relax, and enjoy your own personal Grand Tour of Italy!

Works Cited *

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(*Pictorial references included at the end of the powerpoint)

A little about the performer:

Bruce Leto has had the privilege of playing piano for over 16 years and studying with the excellent teachers Linda de Pasquale and Curtis Cacioppo during that time. He performs both extensive solo work and also has appeared as a pianist with Settlement Music School's Advanced Study "Braverman String Quartet" and the "Episcopal Academy Chamber Ensemble." In addition to his accomplishments in the Chamber Music Program at Settlement Music School, Bruce has also competed as a soloist in many competitions. His most notable achievements, however, are receiving Finalist Recognition in the Philadelphia Orchestra's Greenfield Competition in 2000 and 2002, winning 1st prize in the Dora Khyatt Music Competition at Episcopal Academy in 2007, 2009, and 2010, being a Prizewinner of the National West Chester Piano Competition in 2010, and most recently winning the

Haverford/Bryn Mawr College Student Concerto Competition in 2013. His most notable soloist achievements include: receiving Finalist Recognition in the Philadelphia Orchestra Greenfield Competition in 2000 and 2002, winning 1st prize in the Dora Khyatt Music Competition at Episcopal Academy in 2007, 2009, and 2010, being a prizewinner in the National West Chester Piano Competition in 2010, and most recently winning the Haverford/Bryn Mawr College Student Concerto Competition in 2013. In 2011, under the instruction of Curt Cacioppo, Bruce Leto was accepted into both the Chautauqua Music Festival in New York and the Orfeo International Music Festival in Vipiteno, Italy, in which he chose to participate. He has performed in masterclasses for award-winning pianists such as Veda Zuponicic, Ricardo Piacentini, Steven Mayer, and Leon Bates. Bruce looks forward to learning new repertoire this upcoming year!

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