

Senior Performance Project  
A Music Senior Thesis (MUS 4990)  
In Music Core

by:

Abbey DesRochers

Thesis Advisor: Deborah Masloski

Thesis Committee: Dimitri Shapovalov and Fumi Nakayama

Performance Day: October 2, 2021

Expected Graduation Date: Spring 2021

## Abstract

My piano studies while at Carthage included six terms of private lessons with Dr. Debbie Masloski. The culmination of my studies within the Music Department at Carthage College will be represented as a piano recital exploring the works of various composers from the well-known artist, Ludwig Beethoven to the underrepresented African American female musician, Florence Price. The diversity of repertoire presented in my performance intends to portray various artistic aspects of composers' compositions due to the social, political, and cultural climate of their times. This contributes to the name I chose for this recital, which integrates the subjective ideas I have pondered in Music History courses with the technical and artistic objectives of my private piano studies during my time in the department. My vision also incorporates the idea of "embracing the present moment." I will connect these notions of my vision as my proposal becomes more detailed.

"Inwardness" is a concept that stuck with me from the Music History courses. Through leading productive discussions, Dimitri sparked a passion within me about the way music evolved during the Romantic Era; artists began to present their work to others with intentions more than pure entertainment. Music encourages the individual to look within themselves and explore the depths of the human experience. I connect with this concept in that the expressive components to my piano training have come more naturally to me than the technical aspects. I desire to communicate through my music in a way that encourages the listener to explore their innermost being as it relates to their past experiences and future endeavours, while simultaneously soaking in the present moment.

As with many artists, I struggle to recognize my strengths without putting more attention on my weaknesses. The fixation on my weaknesses throughout my piano training contributes as a barrier in my progress. Memorization is tough. Sure, it is for everyone. Yes, it's a lot of work for everyone. I do not, however, want to minimize my personal experience. My fearful brain reminds me of past performance failures. My anxious mind wanders into future "what ifs" of potential mistakes. My perfectionistic tendencies - instilled in me in the past as a developing young child - prevent me from staying present, and moving forward. The psychological responses present physiologically, and my playing is affected. All this happening in my body while playing? Forget about it. I shut down; I become paralyzed, unmotivated, defeated. Instead of intentionally playing each note, autopilot kicks in; my practice becomes ineffective;

This circles back to the idea of staying present. We live in a society that measures success in efficiency, productivity, and perfection. It completely contradicts the intentions of Romantic Era artists who encouraged deep and intentional reflection. I notice that when I focus on the present moment and intentionality, my practice is effective and my playing is enhanced. I am able to have a conversation with the composer and ask him or her what they were trying to communicate during the moment that they composed the piece (figuratively speaking of course). As the performer, I think of myself as a vessel to share music from composer to audience. In a way, I am

the bridge of the present moment that connects the past experience of the composer to the future experience of the audience.

They say that growth occurs outside one's comfort zone. This performance will no doubt push me out of my comfort zone. I want to use it as an opportunity to embrace the idea of me as a vessel from composer to audience. This will require focus on staying grounded in the moment, and recognition that I am not the most important part of the experience. It is the music and the listening experience. We are all experiencing the music together - in our own unique ways - as it is presented at that specific moment in time. We all come together as we are in the moment - varying emotional states, life stages, and personal experience. Imperfectly beautiful. Human to human connection through music; self to self inward reflection through music. I think this is an important step towards growth as not only a musician, but as an individual, for it takes a humble and gracious approach - it humanizes self in the performance experience, rather than idolizing and pressuring the self to be perfect.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to show my gratitude for the Carthage music faculty that helped me become the artistic individual I am today. Most notably, Dr. Debbie Masloski and Dimitri Shapovalov.

**Table of Contents**

Musical Preparation	5
Program Notes	7
Senior Thesis Self-Assessment	10
Program	12
Program Poster	14

## Musical Preparation

A few recordings that I referenced through my musical preparation for this recital included:

Alfred Brendel

<https://open.spotify.com/track/6ZwxdvWbDoL97cGvSn6wOu?si=e8ec5856929a4c29>

Philip Glass

<https://open.spotify.com/track/2ftHpReHQLPrCfR6ZCmXub?si=b3f7554f5543418d>

Samantha Ege

<https://open.spotify.com/track/5nMvevdNQSoF34Bc3WVM2?si=54d1649c3c50463a>

Mika Sasaki

<https://open.spotify.com/track/5JL0m2WslvYjHVBaDXKaK4?si=7a7e6e91e4794eaf>

Arthur Rubinstein

<https://open.spotify.com/track/2DMWqdcuYP9YbzAscFsoll?si=18a5c10fc8c64e06>

The recordings influenced my execution of the pieces, as well as inspired me to explore the music as the composer wrote it in contrast with my intuitive musical sense. I learned to dig deeper into the music as an attempt to honor the composer as they wish their music to be communicated. Most notably, Samantha Ege's playing of Florence Price's piece. This piece is not well known, so it was tricky to find recordings. Even when tracking down the sheet music, I had to contact a few different publication companies to help me get my hands on it. In every step of the preparation process, especially when I felt defeated, I went back to the thought of how truly amazing it is that I got to play such an incredible piece by a unique composer. For this, I am grateful.

I learned much about myself during the preparation process for this performance. I learned how to synthesize information from a variety of reliable sources in order to reach a final creative product. I kept an open mind in each lesson, each class, each practice session. It's safe to say there were times when my brain wanted to immediately close off and shut down. It was these times of defeat that I learned the most about myself - when self doubt, fear of failure, debilitating perfectionism all crept in. I learned the capabilities of perseverance. Humans are incredible and adaptable. We can do hard things, despite obstacles we may encounter.

In relying on teachings, references, and inspiration, the challenge was to turn to my inner voice - arguably, the most important voice in one's life. It has kept me alive thus far in life, but when I am put in a stressful situation, I seem to panic and look to others for validation and plea for respite from the pressure and pain. In the stress that resulted from the preparation process, I learned what works and what does not work for me in terms of getting through and fulfilling the task at hand without neglecting my own needs. This will be a continuous journey through each

stressful event in my life, but I gained new insights from this experience to inform my future endeavors. I recognize that each experience in my life is innately unique, thus I will use past experiences to inform, and ultimately live one day at a time, each moment in time.

## Program Notes

### Piano Sonata No.5 in C Minor, Op. 10 No. 1

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

- I. Allegro molto e con brio
- II. Adagio molto
- III. Finale (Prestissimo)

Beethoven's Op. 10 No. 1 piano sonata in C minor (1795-97) has a stormy and turbulent sound. The composer commonly used the key of C minor to depict the unsettled time of revolution during his lifetime. This sonata resides in Beethoven's "early period." Pieces written during that time displayed the strict elements of classical music established by composers like Mozart and Haydn, with an emphasis on clarity, restraint, and balance. Although the compositional form is quite simplistic, following traditional sonata form, it is not quite so simple to play, since attention to detail is crucial in conveying the mood and spirit of the piece. Beethoven's sound became more individualistic as time went on, and, during his middle and later periods he became notorious for resisting conformity to the typical sounds of the other composers of his time. In this composition, written toward the end of his "early period," we mostly hear Beethoven striving for the restraint and balance that was expected of him; but there are short glimpses of the explosive individuality that made him unique. For example, the first movement opens with a big explosion on the first beat, but very quickly pulls back, as if Beethoven is apologizing. This continues through the opening as we hear him beg to be heard, and step back, and beg to be heard, and step back, again and again.

This brings me to the title and theme that I have chosen for my recital - *This Moment in Time*. Being in the moment requires each of us as individuals to somehow be at peace with balancing the voices and opinions of others with our own internal voice. As humans, we are continually making decisions in each moment of every day. Clearly, it is advantageous for us to consider the advice of others when making all these decisions. However, when it comes right down to it, we must each make our own decisions, based upon our own intuition - our own voice. It often seems easier to go along with what everyone else is thinking and doing. But it is especially in those moments in time that we need to rely upon the voice that lies within each of us. During my performance of his sonata today, I keep in mind the individualistic courage demonstrated by Beethoven when he pushed back against the compositional norms of his day.

## **Mad Rush**

Phillip Glass (1937-present)

Continuing the Moment in Time theme, we move next to *Mad Rush*, the meditative minimalist work composed by Phillip Glass. The intent of the piece is to convey the feeling that time is relative. In describing his work, Glass noted:

Openings and closings, beginnings and endings. Everything in between passes as quickly as the blink of an eye. An eternity precedes the opening and another, if not the same, follows the closing. Somehow everything that lies in between seems for a moment more vivid. What is real to us becomes forgotten, and what we don't understand will be forgotten, too.

Glass wrote the composition in honor of the Dalai Lama's visit to America in 1979. The Dalai Lama's arrival time to St. John The Divine Cathedral in New York was uncertain, which is why the piece was created to last indefinitely. This way, the audience hopefully wouldn't recognize any delay. The phrase "mad rush" is defined as, "a situation in which you are hurrying to do something." The title is quite ironic considering its meditative trance, as well as Glass' original intentions for giving the piece an indefinite length. When we think about meditation, we are reminded of mindfulness. Mindful meditation encourages slow, present moment thinking.

## **Fantasia Nègre No.1 in E Minor**

Florence Price (1887-1953)

Florence Price's *Fantasia Negre No. 1* is based upon an old Negro Spiritual - *Sinner Please Don't Let This Harvest Pass* - which deals with another aspect of time; getting your life together, and the heavy price to be paid if you let a little too much time pass before you do. *Fantasia Negre* translates literally as "Negro Fantasy" - "Negro" pertains to the African heritage of Price's mixed cultural background, and "Fantasy" conveys the outpouring of Price's imagination onto the page. Women composers were, and still are, wildly underrepresented, but considering the fact that she was also of African descent makes her rarer still. Price earned degrees in piano teaching and organ performance at the New England Conservatory in the early 1900's. She later moved to Chicago and made history in 1933 as the first Black woman to have a symphony performed by a major national orchestra when the Chicago Symphony Orchestra premiered her Symphony No. 1 in E minor.

Listen for Price's voice begging to be heard as the hymn melody makes its appearance throughout the piece in various ways. May her perseverance of prejudices faced during her time not go overlooked. I encourage us to pay respect and appreciation to her work in our time, at *This Moment in Time*.

## Soirées musicales Op.6: II. Notturmo

Clara Schumann (1819-1896)

Reflective and wistful, Clara Schumann's Notturmo cultivates the romantic ideals of her time. The focus turned from restraint and structure to originality and individuality. Composers of her time began exploring the freedom of personal emotional expression. A concept called "inwardness" developed heavily during the Romantic period of music. Music encourages each individual to look within themselves and explore the depths of the human experience.

Like Florence Price, Clara Schumann was not given the same respect as the male composers of her time. Her words describe the enormity of the obstacles that she encountered:

*I once believed that I possessed creative talent, but I have given up this idea; a woman must not desire to compose—there has never yet been one able to do it. Should I expect to be the one?*

It is heartbreaking that such a powerful and beautiful artistic voice lacks such deserved respect. We hear this voice aching with overwhelming melancholy within the captivating melody of her Notturmo. One can hardly help but remain present as each note draws them closer to the voice within, perhaps exploring the most painful parts of human existence.

## Nocturnes, Op. 27: No. 2 in D-Flat Major

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

Chopin's nocturnes are the most intimate of all his works. The composer wrote a set of twenty-one, each infused with charm and elegance, yet unique in their varying moods. "Nocturne" suggests an aspect of evening - perhaps an image of the moon reflecting water on a dark night - and the emotions one might associate with this time of day. It is quite easy to associate a feeling of loneliness with the evening, for it seems that the darkness brings out a sort of melancholic emotion. Similar to Clara Schumann's work, Chopin's Op. 27. No. 2 nocturne encourages the listener to turn inward to their own voice. Metaphorically, the sweeping left hand accompaniment represents the "white noise" of the outside world, while the right hand melody sings over the top as a representation of individuality and expression yearning to be heard. Chopin's composition encourages the listener to explore their innermost being as it relates to their past experiences and future endeavours, while simultaneously soaking in the present moment.

## Senior Thesis Self-Assessment

My senior project demonstrated my ability to work on musical problems by combining musical capabilities in performance. Most of the analysis portion of this project took place in preparation for the recital. I dissected each piece of music visually, as written by the composer, so that I knew it well enough to focus on artistic execution during performance. In performance, I became aware of a tricky balance that takes place when put in a spotlight setting. That is, the balance of focusing on technical execution - memory and other technical elements of playing, such as fingerings - while conveying the artistic elements of the music as a vessel from composer to audience. Not to mention, also pouring my own individual expression into the music. It's a balancing act of multiple factors. Perhaps analogous to life: life's a balance of living for ourselves and others, with consideration to external factors of the social environment and history.

Honestly, my intuition anticipated this tricky component to performance in the preparation process. It kept me from wanting to do the performance at all. However, it wasn't until the time of my performance that I would realize perhaps this is the nature of any performing art. Which leads me to the question I focus on in reflection of my senior project: Why do we let fear inhibit the sharing of our artistic and creative endeavors?

I think not only about music history, but the history of human experience with creative endeavors in relation to social and political influences. Women composers, dating back to Clara Schumann and Florence Price, have struggled to receive recognition. This did not stop them from creating art. I think of Beethoven's experience with loss of hearing. This did not stop him from creating art. We see this in not only musicians, but in painters, sculptures, designers, dancers... creators.

There is pain in this life. It's unavoidable. Afterall, how long would we actually stay alive if we didn't have the ability to feel pain, or fear? Think back to cavemen. They relied on fight or flight on a physical level in order to simply stay alive. Luckily with the development of human knowledge and understanding, we recognize the importance of needs beyond the physical. Although sometimes difficult to make sense of, we can give attention to the vast array of emotions that we experience in this life. In sitting with the uncertainty of pain and fear, I think of perseverance. It exists for a reason. Humans are incredible creatures, capable of hard things. Of course we are going to experience physiological responses to a situation in which we don't feel safe. I think it's important to reflect on perhaps why we don't feel safe. In my experience, I was in fear of what others would think of my performance. Sure, a performance is not at the cost of a musician's physical safety, but humans have psychological, emotional, and social needs to be met as well. We want to feel safe, heard, and loved.

In an odd way, this project actually taught me more about life and a way of living beyond my identity as a musician. I learned that we can get these needs met in various ways, and perhaps each need isn't met in every aspect of our lives. We must consider the fact that we can't be everything to everyone. As a perfectionist and a helper, I tend to want to please everyone. We can communicate with, give to, and teach others in connection with one another. This gives meaning

to life together. At the end of the day, the only one we can truly please is ourselves. Perhaps this performance didn't reach every single person in the audience. Perhaps there were parts that did and parts that didn't. I recognize that this was completely out of my control. We all have our own unique strengths. I realize that performance isn't my strongest way to communicate and connect with others. This doesn't mean I can't fulfill my need to communicate and connect; give and receive; love and be loved.

Although the uncertainty of what my performance conveyed to others still makes me feel fear, I know what this performance meant to me. I know what it taught me. I saw it through. The perseverance makes me proud of myself, and gives me the hope that I am indeed capable of difficult things from here on out. Taking it day by day. Breath by breath. Each moment in time.

## **Program**

### **Piano Sonata No.5 in C Minor, Op. 10 No. 1**

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

- I. Allegro molto e con brio
- II. Adagio molto
- III. Finale (Prestissimo)

### **Mad Rush**

Phillip Glass (1937-present)

Intermission

### **Fantasie Nègre No.1 in E Minor**

Florence Price (1887-1953)

### **Soirées musicales Op.6: II. Notturmo**

Clara Schumann (1819-1896)

### **Nocturne in D-flat Major Op. 27 No. 2**

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)


 CARTHAGE  
COLLEGE

CARTHAGE MUSIC DEPARTMENT PRESENTS

# This Moment in Time

Student Piano Recital Featuring  
Abbey DesRochers

Saturday, Oct. 2, 2021 | 7:30 p.m. | A. F. Siebert Chapel

## PROGRAM NOTES

must not desire to compose—there has never yet been one able to do it. Should I expect to be the one?

It is heartbreaking that such a powerful and beautiful artistic voice lacks such deserved respect. We hear this voice aching with overwhelming melancholy within the captivating melody of her *Nocturno*. One can hardly help but remain present as each note draws them closer to the voice within, perhaps exploring the most painful parts of human existence.

### Nocturnes, Op. 27: No. 2 in D-Flat Major

Chopin's nocturnes are the most intimate of all his works. The composer wrote a set of twenty-one, each infused with charm and elegance, yet unique in their varying moods. "Nocturne" suggests an aspect of evening - perhaps an image of the moon reflecting water on a dark night - and the emotions one might associate with this time of day. It is quite easy to associate a feeling of loneliness with the evening, for it seems that the darkness brings out a sort of melancholic emotion. Similar to Clara Schumann's work, Chopin's Op. 27, No. 2 nocturne encourages the listener to turn inward to their own voice. Metaphorically, the sweeping left hand accompaniment represents the "white noise" of the outside world, while the right hand melody sings over the top as a representation of individuality and expression yearning to be heard. Chopin's composition encourages the listener to explore their innermost being as it relates to their past experiences and future endeavours, while simultaneously soaking in the present moment.

## BIOGRAPHY

Abbey DesRochers is originally from Appleton, Wisconsin. She came to Carthage in 2018 to complete degrees in social work and music. In addition to pursuing a degree which would lead to employment in a helping profession, Abbey wanted to embrace her passion for music and continue her growth as a musician. She can't remember a time when music wasn't part of her life. Abbey's experience in the Carthage Music Department also encouraged her to explore why she plays. It is one thing to continue doing something because it's all you have ever known, but it is quite another to challenge oneself to pause and reflect on why. Abbey's growth as a musician has taught her to trust the process. Abbey would like to thank everyone who has encouraged and supported her on her musical journey (there are many of you). In particular, she wishes to thank her teacher, Debbie Maloski, as well as Dimitri Shapavolov, for enhancing her Carthage experience. She acknowledges the present moment and expresses gratitude to all who are here tonight (and listening at home!)

Let us all come together at this moment in time to share an evening of music.

### CONNECT WITH US

[carthage.edu/fine-arts](http://carthage.edu/fine-arts)  
262-551-5859  
[facebook.com/carthagefinearts](https://facebook.com/carthagefinearts)  
[instagram.com/carthagefinearts](https://instagram.com/carthagefinearts)

### TICKETS REQUIRED

Get tickets 24/7 at [carthage.edu/tickets](http://carthage.edu/tickets)  
or  
262-551-6661  
noon to 5 p.m. Tuesday – Friday

2021-2022 Carthage Music Department Presents

# Abbey DesRochers *This Moment in Time*

Piano Recital

Saturday, Oct. 2 | 7:30 p.m. | A. F. Siebert Chapel



**CARTHAGE  
COLLEGE**

2001 Allford Park Drive  
Reno, WI 53140-1994

Get Tickets 24/7 [carthage.edu/tickets](https://carthage.edu/tickets)

Fine Arts Box Office | 262-583-6661

Tuesday - Friday, Noon - 5 p.m.

[facebook.com/carthagefinearts](https://facebook.com/carthagefinearts) | [instagram.com/carthagefinearts](https://instagram.com/carthagefinearts)