



# Chopin Notes

Chopin Society of Atlanta Quarterly

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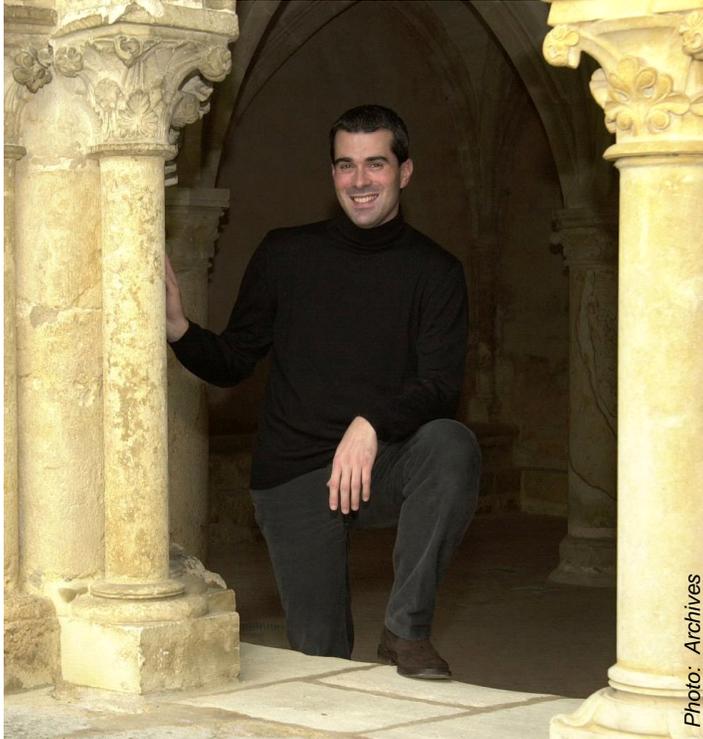


Photo: Archives

## “My Chopin is a secret”

by Bozena U. Zaremba

*Two households, both alike in dignity  
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene  
--William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet*

A small town in the middle of northern Italy, Verona is mostly associated with the tragic story of Romeo and Juliet, but visitors making a “pilgrimage” to the famous balcony will be amazed by the beauty of the town’s ancient and medieval architecture, the richness of its history and the depth of its cultural life. It was the hometown of the famous (or infamous, according to the movie *Amadeus*) composer Antonio Salieri and a lesser-known contemporary composer, Franco Donatoni. It is the home of a renowned summer opera festival that takes place in a Roman amphitheater, the Arena, and a winter concert series for young musicians. The town is also a celebrated center for chamber music and hosts both outstanding chamber music ensembles and orchestral concerts.

This noble music tradition is carried on by another Veronese, pianist **Alberto Nosè**, winner of the First Prize, Gold Medal and Sony Audience Prize of the 15th “Paloma O’Shea” International Piano Competition of Santander (Spain) in 2005. The program of his Carnegie Hall debut in October 2006 included, as if

naturally, Prokofiev’s *Romeo and Juliet*, a series of ten beautiful pieces extracted by the composer himself from his ballet score. I asked Mr. Nosè what he felt performing at this most prestigious concert hall.

Alberto Nosè: Carnegie Hall is so recognized all over the world. It is a big temple of music because the most important artists have played there for many years. I was very satisfied to be a part of this tradition; it was a great privilege. And I admit I like playing for American audiences. They are so warm that I have the feeling of being among friends and music lovers.

**After winning a major prize at a high-status competition, most pianists stop participating in competition, but you kept on participating...and winning.**

When I was seven I started learning music, and shortly afterwards I began to take part in piano competitions, because my former teachers believed that a contest offers the best chance to overcome shyness and fear of playing in front of people. In fact, competitions are very stimulating for young musicians. The last competition in Santander, in 2005, was a turning point for me. I got access to the most important festivals and concert seasons.

**Do you feel any difference between performing at a competition and a concert?**

Every competition requires considerable physical and mental training, apart from being a stressful situation because you find yourself competing with musicians coming from all over the world and worrying if you will meet the jury’s tastes. I must say it’s not a natural condition for a performer, and it’s often difficult to be yourself in the interpretation. On the other hand, when I play a concert I do it for the public, totally. I enter a different atmosphere, as it is the audience itself that gives me the power to fully express myself. It’s a sensation as if the music comes out from myself in a completely free way.

**In the course of your musical education you have participated in master classes conducted by such grand pianists as Maurizio Pollini and Murray Perahia. Can you tell something about them?**

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## Upcoming Events:

### Chopin Recital

**Alberto Nosè**, piano  
**March 16, 2008, 7:00 pm**  
Roswell Cultural Arts Center  
Roswell, GA  
For tickets, call 770.641.1260  
or online at:  
[www.chopinatlanta.org](http://www.chopinatlanta.org)

### Chopin Transcriptions for Violin

**Mariusz Patyra**, violin  
**October 19, 2008, 5:00 pm**  
Roswell Cultural Arts Center  
Winner of Niccolò Paganini  
International Violin Competition  
in 2001; the artist’s website:  
[www.mariuszpatyra.com](http://www.mariuszpatyra.com)

Concert tickets are always discounted for members of the Chopin Society of Atlanta. To become a member join online at [www.chopinatlanta.org](http://www.chopinatlanta.org) or call 770.663.0620

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**Chopin Society of Atlanta has grown a cult following among local piano mavens.**

– Pierre Ruhe, *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, November, 2007

## Chopin's Life and Work Youth Competition

In November 2007 the Chopin Society of Atlanta held its Fourth Annual Atlanta Youth Chopin Competition. Its main objective is to bring Chopin's life and music closer to a new generation of music lovers. The competition consisted of two categories – performance and written.

The required repertoire for the performance competition was one or two pieces of Chopin's original music of different forms, played from memory. The winners in the younger group are: 1st Prize – **Catherine Xie**; 2nd Prize – Katherine Jian; 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize – Julie Xiang and Ingrid Cai. In the older group the winners are: 1<sup>st</sup> Prize – **Fredrick Dong**; 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize – Catherine Zhang; 3rd Prize – Sue Kim and Jesse Zhao; 4<sup>th</sup> Prize – Brandon Hou and Helen Li. In the jury sat Sergio Gallo and Geoffrey Haydon, two distinguished faculty members of the Georgia State University School of Music. **Dr. Sergio Gallo** is a graduate of the Conservatoire Européen de Musique in Paris, the Franz Liszt Academy of Budapest, Hungary, the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (Master of Music and Artist Diploma) and the University of California (DMA). He has performed with orchestras and has taught throughout the Americas, Asia and Europe. **Dr. Geoffrey Haydon** teaches piano, piano literature, jazz history and jazz theory, bridging classical and jazz

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## Annual Fundraising Dinner and Concert



Photo: Mim Eisenberg

Guest of Honor Congressman, Tom Price and President of the Chopin Society of Atlanta, Dorota Lato



Photo: Elzbieta Gürtler-Krawczynska

Radio Personality John Lemley from PBA-WABE 90.1 FM, narrating Piotr Folkert's recital

## GRACE, BEAUTY AND ENERGY

The Chopin Society of Atlanta has a tradition of providing music students with free concert tickets. In exchange, students write essays to express the impact that the music has made on them. Here are selected impressions of some students who attended the latest CSA concert, featuring pianist Kevin Kenner and the Piazzoforte Quintet.

**Sitara Shirol** enjoyed Kevin Kenner's rendition of Chopin's *Polonaise in A-flat major*. She compared the piece to

a dance of a peacock: "Peacocks are beautiful birds with magnificent, colorful feathers. Their dance is graceful, elegant, and symbolizes happiness, beauty, and honesty....The music of *Polonaise A-flat major* sounded in perfect harmony with a peacock's rhythmic dance; ...it has happiness and triumph at the end similar to peacock's triumph and happy ending to its dance."

**Lavanya Ramakrishnan** liked two pieces presented in the second part of

the concert. She described *Michelangelo* as "energetic and lively all the way through." She also "liked how the violinist gave an absorbing start to the piece when he struck the bow against the violin's strings." About *Oblivion* she wrote: "[It] was calm and serene. The beginning of the piece sounded kind of sad, but in a fine manner, saying 'I know you are sad, but everything is going to turn out okay.'" She observed how the lights in the concert hall had an "enchanted effect" on the atmosphere of the two pieces.

*Excerpts have been slightly edited for space and clarity.*

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I know Mr. Pollini thanks to the Piano Academy of Imola, where his son and I have been students. We also played Mozart's Double Piano Concerto together some years ago. All his family is very close to me. I believe that Pollini teaches very differently from the way he plays: his style is somehow majestic, even in Chopin, but very noble. He's a great person, though a strong personality. I met Murray Perahia in Paris, where I played for him at Salle Gaveau in a very prestigious public master class. He's a real gentleman, nice and extremely careful of phrasing and the quality of the sound.

**Now you hold master classes yourself. Do you enjoy teaching?**

I don't enjoy teaching beginner pianists, but master classes are different because you work with pianists who already play well and show interesting personalities. We discuss musical ideas, and it's very inspiring. You can even learn something new from their good and bad habits. The exploration in music is endless.

**Let's talk about the music you play. This year you released a recording of the *Six Keyboard Sonatas, Op.17* by Johann Christian Bach, which is a world premiere on modern piano. Isn't it amazing that they had not been recorded in this version before?**

It is! These pieces are very interesting. They embrace the style of his father, Johann Sebastian and that of the early Mozart. I'm very curious as to what the critics will say about this unusual repertoire on modern piano.

**Why did you decide to record them?**

It was a proposal from [recording label] Naxos. I got the score, and then I listened to a CD by a harpsichordist. I was very inspired, but I felt that something was missing in his performance: that sense of untouched beauty in the melodic line, typical of J. C. Bach's "singing style," "galante," an extremely important feature that can only be expressed on a richer instrument like the piano.

**Were they originally written for the piano or harpsichord?**

At the time of Bach it was typical to give a double "destination" of the music, for harpsichord and fortepiano. But the phrasing and shy dynamics (very few *piano's* and *forte's*) suggest that Bach could have in mind the hammerklavier,

the only instrument able to give voice to this fluent, balanced and light music.

**Do you feel that Johann Christian Bach is underestimated?**

Of course his father's work is better known, and Johann Christian lived in the shadow of Mozart, a rising star at that time. Johann Christian wrote very little for the keyboard, just two series of sonatas, and he devoted himself mostly to orchestral pieces. In fact, he's recognized especially for his symphonies.

**You have a lot of Chopin's music in your repertoire. Not many artists of your generation, at least in America, play Chopin these days.**

I can only speak for myself. Chopin's music is hard to interpret at a high level because it's very difficult and requires a particular sensibility to the Polish traditions and fine education and culture of the sound technique, and this is not for everybody. Moreover there are hundreds of recordings of Chopin's music by the greatest pianists of the past, and we have a huge distinguished tradition to follow.

**What is your key to interpreting Chopin's music?**

It's a secret, and secrets must remain unrevealed. [Smiles.] My interpretation of Chopin's music is very personal.

**Your impressive repertoire encompasses many less popular pieces.**

I like to discover the unknown pieces of the greatest composers, and it's interesting when sometimes I can find in these works the ideas for a major work, like a preparatory study for something bigger, or the other side of the composer's soul. I also love playing music by Berio, Stockhausen or Szymanowski, whose names appear very rarely in concert programs.

**You play a lot of chamber music, too.**

Sure. I think it is important to play chamber music. Sometimes it is more difficult than playing solo. When you play with other instruments, especially with very good musicians, it becomes so inspiring. My favorite formation is quintet, especially Brahms's *Quintet, Op.34 in F minor*, probably the best chamber work ever written.

**When I listened to your recordings I was impressed by the quality of sound. It's crisp and clean. Obviously this is something that you pay**

**particular attention to. I assume that the quality of the concert instrument must be important to you.**

Oh, yes, absolutely, and I get angry when I find a bad piano for a concert. [Laughs.] I believe that the sound is the quality that makes the difference between one pianist and another. Anyway, assume we have a good piano at our disposal. If the musician is not too good, the sound is that of the instrument. If he's good, the sound comes out from his hands. If he's exceptional, the sound arises from the heart and the soul and gets to the instrument through both hands and mind. All this is a mystery.

**What does being a Steinway artist entail?**

Steinway artists are chosen on the basis of their international careers and prominence in the field of piano performance. To qualify, a pianist must own a Steinway piano and also promote the instrument. The Steinway Artist honor has been awarded to many great classical artist, such as Arthur Rubinstein, as well as jazz stars and pop icons. Admittance to the roster is not a monetary, but rather an honorary distinction. It entitles artists to the free use of a Steinway concert-grand instrument for concerts at any location around the world and also guarantees the free use of Steinway practice facilities.

**Most pianists prefer German Steinways to the American Steinways. Do you?**

I generally prefer the German ones, but I have to admit that I have often played on American Steinways that sounded beautiful, and I was very pleased. In my opinion, everything depends on how accurate is the maintenance of the instrument and the tuning.

**Do you often perform in Verona?**

Not really. I truly believe in the saying, "*Nemo propheta in patria.*" ("No one is a prophet in his homeland.")

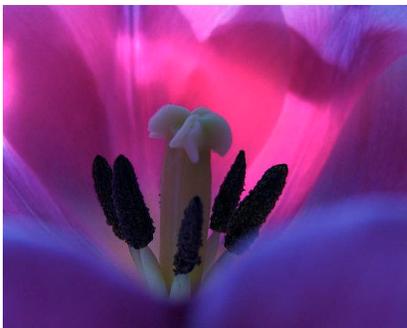
The artist's website: [www.albertonose.com](http://www.albertonose.com)

**Chopin Notes Editorial Staff:**

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President, Chopin Society of Atlanta

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### Close and personal with flowers and bugs — invitation to a photo show



Local photographer Mim Eisenberg gets up close and personal with flowers and bugs. Noted for the intimacy of her macros and her vivid colors, she will be the featured

artist at the Phoenix and Dragon Bookstore gallery in April. In her exhibit, *Drawn In: a macro photography celebration of flora and fauna*, will be a selection of her finest work, including some of her prize-winning photographs as well as her 'Blue Bowl' series and a 'Dictionary of Image' grouping containing photos of flowers, animals, buds, clouds and more, with typographical definitions lovingly layered directly into the images. Join her for the opening reception on **April 4 at 7 PM at 5531 Roswell Road** (just inside the perimeter), or visit the gallery during April. All works on display, both framed or matted, will be for sale.

*Mim Eisenberg, whose photo appears above, is our proof-reader and photographer.*

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styles of performance. He is a member of the Haydon-Lyke Piano Duo, the American Music Trio, the Haydon/Parker Duo and the Georgia State University Faculty Jazztet. Dr. Haydon has performed throughout the U.S., in Europe, Russia, China, Japan, South America and Central America.

In the written competition, participants had to write an essay on Chopin's life and work. The winners in the younger group are: 1<sup>st</sup> Prize – **Sitara Shirol**; 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize – Julie Xiang; 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize – Catherine Xie. In the older group the winners are: 1<sup>st</sup> Prize – **Catherine Zhang**; 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize – Fred Dong; 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize – Brandon Hou. All winning works have been submitted to the International Competition for an essay about Chopin's life and work announced by the International Federation of

Chopin Societies in Warsaw. An international jury will select the best three works, which then will be published in *Chopin in the World*, the federation's quarterly bulletin. The essays submitted to the Chopin Society of Atlanta were judged by **Cecylia Arzewski**, concertmaster of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, who has also performed as soloist with orchestras throughout the United States. A graduate of the Julliard School and a student of Yascha Heifetz, Ms. Arzewski was an award winner at the International Bach Festival in 1978. Before she joined the Atlanta Symphony in 1990 she was a member of the Boston Symphony for 17 years.

**Awards were granted in all categories. Congratulations to the winners!**

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