

P R O G R A M N O T E S

Frederic Chopin (1810 - 1849)

Scherzo (“a Joke”) Op. 20

Chopin was a man who, from childhood, was prone to illnesses. Popular in Europe’s arts and music circles, Chopin had many romances in his short life, the most famous being one with the older French writer, George Sand (real name: Aurore Dupin). Theirs was a very tumultuous relationship, where she at times made fun of the composer’s weakened health, calling him her “third child” and “beloved little corpse.” Hurt and disrespected by his lover, he ended their ten-year relationship shortly before his death.

Have you ever suffered a debilitating illness or been hurt by a beloved’s actions or words?

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827)

Sonata Op. 109

- *Vivace, ma non troppo*
- *Prestissimo*

Arguably the world’s greatest composer was tormented by an unforeseen and unpreventable Goliath, the worse enemy imaginable for any musician: the gradual loss of his hearing from the age of 26. Completely deaf for the last 15 years of his life (including when he wrote this sonata), the following excerpt is from a famous letter he wrote to his brothers in 1802 from Heiligenstadt, Vienna:

“Oh you men who think or say that I am malevolent, stubborn, or misanthropic, how greatly do you wrong me. You do not know the secret cause which makes me seem that way to you. From childhood on, my heart and soul have been full of the tender feeling of goodwill, and I was even inclined to accomplish great things. But, think that for six years now I have been hopelessly afflicted, made worse by senseless physicians, from year to year deceived with hopes of improvement, finally compelled to face the prospect of a lasting malady... it was impossible for me to say to people, “Speak louder, shout, for I am deaf.” Ah, how could I possibly admit an infirmity in the one sense which ought to be more perfect in me than others, a sense which I once possessed in the highest perfection, a perfection such as few in my profession enjoy or ever have enjoyed. – Oh I cannot do it; therefore forgive me when you see me draw back when I would have gladly mingled with you. My misfortune is doubly painful to me because I am bound to be misunderstood; for me there can be no relaxation with my fellow men, no refined conversations, no mutual exchange of ideas. I must live almost alone, like one who has been banished... I can mix with society only as much as true necessity demands. If I approach near to people a hot terror seizes upon me, and I fear being exposed to the danger that my condition might be noticed. . . what a humiliation for

me when someone standing next to me heard a flute in the distance and I heard nothing, or someone standing next to me heard a flute in the distance and I heard nothing, or someone heard a shepherd singing and again I heard nothing. Such incidents drove me almost to despair; a little more of that and I would have ended me life – it was only my art that held me back... – Divine One, Thou seest my inmost soul Thou knowest that therein dwells the love of mankind and the desire to do good. . . Thanks to [virtue] and to my art, I did not end my life by suicide...”

Have you ever experienced the trauma associated with an unpreventable tragedy? An earthquake? A stock market crash? A death? An illness? A failed relationship?

Franz Schubert (1797 - 1828)

Impromptu Op. 90/1

Schubert came from a large family. Born in Vienna, he was twelfth out of 14 children, but nine of his siblings died in their childhood. Though not recorded in history books, knowing the family turmoil and sorrow that accompanies death, there were surely times when the young Schubert must have felt alone and unnoticed by his family members. He dearly wanted to marry a young soprano, but a new series of marriage laws in Austria made it extremely difficult for a man to wed without first showing he had the financial means to support a household. As a poor musician often dependent upon the generosity of his friends for lodging and food, Schubert was hence denied the hand of his beloved and never did marry.

Unfortunately, things did not improve for Herr Schubert, who, like all Vienna, revered the formidable Beethoven. As often with greatness, Schubert’s music was not widely acknowledged in his lifetime. Even today, often getting the short end of the comparison stick, Schubert’s music begs to be valued for the lyrical beauty only he could create.

Have you ever felt unappreciated or unfavourably compared to someone?

Robert Schumann (1810 - 1856)

Kinderszenen Op. 15/7 “Träumerei”

Schumann was a man who battled lifelong depression. The illness of mental disorder was strong in his family. His father, mother and sister all died within a year; his sister and his uncle committed suicide. His son, grappling schizophrenia, was admitted into a mental institution at the age of 28 and remained there till his death. Schumann himself made two attempts at ending his life, and fearing to hurt his wife, asked to spend his last years in an insane asylum.

Have life’s events ever drawn you to contemplate suicide?

Hachidai Nakamura (1931 - 1992)

Ue o Muite Arukō (“I Look Up As I Walk”)

(Arranged by Julie Lowe)

Lyrics:

I look up as I walk, so that the tears won’t fall
Remembering those spring days, but I am all alone tonight
I look up as I walk, counting the stars with tearful eyes
Remembering those summer days, but I am all alone tonight
Happiness lies beyond the clouds
Happiness lies up above the sky
I look up as I walk, so that the tears won’t fall
Though the tears well up as I walk,
For tonight I’m all alone tonight
Remembering those autumn days, but I am all alone tonight
Sadness lies in the shadow of the stars,
Sadness lurks in the shadow of the moon
I look up as I walk, so that the tears won’t fall...
Though the tears well up as I walk, for tonight I’m all alone

Have you ever felt all alone?

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 - 1750)

Italian Concerto BWV 971

- *First movement (untitled)*

Bach was a composer who knew death intimately. Orphaned by the age of 10, he was moved in with his older brother, also a musician. At 21 he married his second cousin, Maria Barbara. They had seven children, but three of them died. While abroad with his patron, Prince Leopold, Maria suddenly passed away. A year and a half later, Bach married again. With Anna Magdalena, they had 13 children, but seven of them died. In his last year, Bach began losing his sight and was totally blind at death.

Have you ever lost someone you loved? Has a tragic event hurt someone you deeply cared about?

Henry Blackaby: “Experiencing God Day by Day” Devotional

March 26th:

Then Jesus said to them, “All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written. . .” (Mark 14:27)

As you follow Jesus you will face moments of great distress. At times it will seem that events conspire to cause you to stumble in your relationship with Him. You do not initiate them, but they arise from opposition or the intensity of your circumstances. Nevertheless, failure is the end result. The disciples faced such fierce opposition to their Lord that they all failed Him on the night Jesus was crucified.

You may fear that your failure has caught God by surprise. Perhaps you promised, like Peter, to stand with the Lord, but you failed. God was just as aware that you would fail Him as He was with the original disciples. He has made provision to respond every time you stumble. Don’t think that somehow your failures are bigger or more complex than any God has dealt with. If you are facing challenges that seem overwhelming, don’t be discouraged. God has already foreseen them and prepared for them (1 Cor. 10:13).

March 28th:

“But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.” Then they all forsook Him and fled. (Mark 14:49b-50)

There are times when, in the darkest moments of your life, the only comfort left for you is a word from God. Jesus faced the cruel injustice of a hostile world, but perhaps His deepest pain came when His closest friends deserted and betrayed Him... Jesus found His comfort in the Scriptures (Matt. 26:20–25, 31). The Scriptures kept everything in perspective for the Savior, holding Him steadfast in the knowledge that everything He was experiencing was according to His Father’s plan. Jesus could proceed with confidence because the Scriptures assured Him that the Father was in control.

The word of God will guide you in the same way. There will be times when events around you will confuse you. Those in whom you’ve placed your trust will fail you. Others will abandon you. You will be misunderstood and criticized. In these times of distress, when your devotion and obedience are put to the greatest test, you must let Scripture guide and comfort you. Never let the faithlessness of others determine what you do. Turn to the Scriptures and allow them to reorient you to God and His activity... and He will safely guide you through your difficult moments.