

HAI-KYUNG SUH PIANO RECITAL

IN LOVE

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HAI-KYUNG SUH, PIANO

The Story Behind the Recital

Sixty years of music, and the work still ahead.
The 2026 Carnegie Hall recital of Hai-Kyung Suh.

*"I find no peace, and have no arms for war;
I fear, and hope; I burn, and freeze like ice."*

Francesco Petrarca, Canzoniere 134
set by Liszt as Sonetto 104 del Petrarca

One Story

The program of this recital was conceived as a single narrative. It began with one wish, to speak of the countless faces of love, and it carries one question through four chapters: how many faces does love hold? The recital's title, *In Love*, and its Korean word *yeonmo*, is the name of that question: not simply love, but a love long held in the heart, loving with longing.

And nothing makes the question sharper than Brahms and Liszt: two composers of the same age who belonged to almost opposite styles and schools, answering the same question in entirely different languages. The very structure of the program proves that love has more than one face.

Nothing shows the question better than Petrarca's poem: that love holds and takes in everything, even what seems contradictory and opposed. We burn and freeze. We find no peace, yet have no wish for war. Each work was chosen because it speaks one shade no other work here can speak. Remove any one of them, and the story loses a color. It renders the gradations of love as gradations of tone.

Where This Recital Stands

The October 3 recital at Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall opens a new door after sixty years of music. At the program's center stands a new waltz that Hai-Kyung Suh commissioned herself. To commission a work is to lend one's stage and one's name so that music not yet in existence can come into the world. *Valse per pianoforte* is dedicated to her.

The evening's story is therefore twofold. On the surface, a journey through the countless faces of love; beneath it, the love story of a performer and her instrument across more than half a century on one stage. Love lost, love unspoken, love newborn, love written: the four chapters are also the autobiography of a pianist who has loved the piano for more than sixty years.

The Four Chapters

I

Love Lost

Gluck, Melody from Orfeo (arr. Sgambati)

The evening opens with the quietest declaration possible: Orpheus, who conquered death with music and lost his love with a single glance. Sgambati's transcription is beloved precisely because it holds grief and beauty in one simple line. Loss is one of love's faces: that is the story's premise.

In the opera, first staged in 1762, this is the flute melody heard as Orpheus, having sung the Furies to sleep, reaches Elysium, the paradise within the underworld where the blessed spirits dwell in peace. The gods, moved by his song, agree to return his wife on one condition: he must not look back until they reach the light. He cannot bear the sound of her voice, he turns, and Eurydice vanishes again.

Giovanni Sgambati, a pupil of Liszt, carried the melody to the piano, and generations of great pianists have treasured it as an encore since.

II

Love Unspoken

Brahms, Op. 79, Op. 118, Paganini Variations

Brahms revered and loved Clara Schumann for forty years and never spoke it in words. Instead, he dedicated music. Restraint, longing, and fire: the unspoken shades fill the first half.

The Two Rhapsodies (Op. 79) of 1879 were dedicated to Elisabeth von Herzogenberg, Brahms's cherished pupil and friend. The B minor Rhapsody storms forward until, at its center, a lullaby unexpectedly surfaces; the G minor is a darkly burning ballade. It is told that the young Brahms, after briefly teaching Elisabeth, handed her to another teacher because he found himself too taken with her charm. Composed on the outside, ardent within: music that resembles the man, and the record of another affection held in restraint, distinct from Clara.

In 1893 the sixty-year-old Brahms sent one of his last musical letters to the seventy-three-year-old Clara: the Six Pieces, Op. 118. Forty years had passed since he met the Schumanns at twenty; the two never married, and everything unsaid between them lives in these pages. Tonight brings the Intermezzo in A major, among the tenderest confessions in the piano literature, and the G minor Ballade, proud stride and gentle heart in one frame.

Easily confused with Liszt's Paganini etudes, the set that closes the first half is by Brahms: his Op. 35, famous as one of the most formidable works ever written for the piano. Published simply as Studies for the Piano, and called by

Clara the Witch's Variations, it takes the theme of Paganini's Caprice No. 24 and disciplines passion into the instrument's most daunting virtuosity. The very heart that was so tender toward Clara in the Intermezzo now appears in the armor of technique.

III

Love Newborn

Jeajoon Ryu, Valse per pianoforte (world premiere)

At the program's center, a new voice. At Suh's commission, Jeajoon Ryu has written a waltz to suit the romantic pianist, modern in language and romantic at heart, receiving its world premiere at Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall on October 3. Love, in this chapter, is something still being born.

Jeajoon Ryu, a student of Krzysztof Penderecki, is one of Korea's foremost composers. This is no ordinary commission: it is a work written for one performer, shaped to her musical language. A pianist who could have filled the evening with the scores of the old masters asked a living composer for something new, and its first sounding happens tonight. Everyone in the hall becomes the first audience of music no one has ever heard. Within the story of In Love, this is why the chapter is called love newborn.

IV

Love Written

Liszt, Transcendental Etude No. 10, Sonetto 104, Rhapsodie espagnole

Liszt gives the story its title and its resolution. The Transcendental Etude is the storm; the Petrarch Sonnet is the poem quoted above made sound; and the Rhapsodie espagnole begins in dark ceremony and ends in festive light. The journey that began with Orpheus's loss ends in celebration.

Liszt left the Transcendental Etude No. 10 without a title, though Ferruccio Busoni later proposed the name Appassionata for its vehemence. It was at the international competition bearing Busoni's name that tonight's pianist, in 1980, became the first Asian to win the top prize.

The Sonetto 104 del Petrarca, from the second year of the Annees de pelerinage, sets the very sonnet that opens this note: the contradictions of the poet's lifelong love for Laura, sung by the piano. The recital's title, In Love, was born from this poem.

The finale, the Rhapsodie espagnole, begins in the dark ceremony of the ancient Folia and ends in the brilliant light of the Jota aragonesa. From loss to blessing: love, survived and transfigured.

The Artist, Hai-Kyung Suh

Pianist Hai-Kyung Suh became, in 1980, the first Asian to win the top prize at the Busoni International Piano Competition: the artist who opened the door for Korean pianists onto the international stage, the one who first cleared the path walked today by the young performers of the world's concert halls. She followed Busoni with a top prize at the ARD Competition in Munich, and became the youngest-ever recipient of the Korean government's Order of Cultural Merit. Known as a Rachmaninoff specialist for her Deutsche Grammophon recordings of the complete Rachmaninoff and Tchaikovsky concertos, she performs Rachmaninoff's Paganini Rhapsody with the Seoul Philharmonic under Jaap van Zweden on September 19, 2026, and two weeks later, on October 3, meets her New York audience at Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall.

Why Brahms and Liszt Share One Stage

Because they belong to one argument. Brahms and Liszt breathed the same air of the mid-nineteenth century and agreed on almost nothing. Liszt led the New German School at Weimar, dissolving form into poetry; Brahms held the classical line, and in 1860, together with the violinist Joseph Joachim and others, published the famous open manifesto against the so-called music of the future of the New German School. The War of the Romantics divided concert life for a generation.

Yet both men, on opposite sides of that war, turned to the same instrument to say what words cannot. Set side by side, they prove the evening's thesis better than any single composer could: love has no single dialect. The same century produced the confession hidden inside Brahms's strict forms and the confession blazing openly in Liszt's poems for piano. One program, two opposed languages, one subject.

"Brahms hid love inside form.

Liszt burned form away for love.

Between them, as in love itself, lie a thousand shades."

Appendix: The Sonnet in Full (Canzoniere 134)

*I find no peace, and have no arms for war;
I fear, and hope; I burn, and freeze like ice;
I fly above the heavens, and lie on earth,
and nothing do I hold, yet embrace the world.*

*One holds me prisoner, opening no door, closing none;
neither keeps me for her own, nor loosens the bonds.
Love does not kill me, and does not break my chains,
wishes me neither alive, nor free of my trouble.*

*I see without eyes, and cry out without tongue;
I long to perish, and yet I beg for rescue;
I hate myself, and love another.*

*I feed on sorrow, and weeping, laugh;
death and life displease me equally,
and it is because of you, my lady, that I am so.*

Program

Melody from Orfeo (arr. Sgambati)	4:00
Gluck	

Two Rhapsodies, Op. 79	13:30
Brahms	

Intermezzo in A major and Ballade in G minor, from Op. 118	9:10
Brahms	

Variations on a Theme by Paganini, Book II, Op. 35	13:00
Brahms	

Valse per pianoforte (world premiere)	5:00
Jeajoon Ryu	

Transcendental Etude No. 10 in F minor	4:50
Liszt	

Sonetto 104 del Petrarca	7:30
Liszt	

Rhapsodie espagnole, S. 254	14:00
Liszt	

Jeajoon Ryu, *Valse per pianoforte*
Commissioned by Hai-Kyung Suh
Dedicated to Hai-Kyung Suh

OCTOBER 3, 2026 · SATURDAY · 7:30 PM

Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall
881 Seventh Avenue at 57th Street, New York

Parterre \$100 · Mezzanine \$80 (fees included)

Groups of 10 or more: the \$11 per-ticket fee is waived

Group inquiries: sophia.choo@suhhaikyungfoundation.org

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