

Let Soyeon Kate Lee be your guide on "musical journey"

By Brock Weir

"It's a Scriabin sandwich," jokes pianist Soyeon Kate Lee, as she puts the finishing touches on the plan for her upcoming Aurora concert.

Ms. Lee is set to hit the stage of the Aurora Cultural Centre this Friday, March 11, and in devising her set list, one of her first stops was the extensive work produced by Russian composer Alexander Scriabin.

Scriabin's later works are generally more familiar to classical music aficionados but there are a lot of new gems left to mine.

"I am introducing [some of his works] which are rarely performed or heard, not because they are not accessible by any means, but simply because his later works are much more famous," says Ms. Lee. "His idol was Chopin, so I am programming a few pieces by this Russian artist who was madly influenced by Chopin and I am going to start with a piece he wrote when he was only 14 and had a crush on this girl.

"It is unbelievable he was able to do that at such a young age and you can hear the influence of Chopin immediately."

Ms. Lee knows all about talent budding early. She counts her parents as her chief influences. Although they are not musicians, they gave her the open-mindedness and discipline essential to following her dreams to the grand concert halls of the world to more intimate venues like the Aurora Cultural Centre.

"Piano recitals began in salons and they were meant to be intimate experiences," she says. "I always prefer to be in a smaller setting. While it is exciting to play in bigger venues, and that comes with a different kind of pressure, but for piano recitals, I like the intimate setting because you can really experience the music viscerally.

"Oftentimes in these big halls, it is really as if the music is taking place rather far away from you and I think, especially in this day and age when everything is so in your face and up close, that is why classical music has been having problems in maintaining an audience; the experience is just not visceral enough.

"When you sit five feet away from the performer or a string player or pianist and you are engaged in everything they are doing and you can hear the smallest, most quiet sound from the instrument to the roaring grandness of our dynamic then there is no way not to be moved and excited by this music."

As a performer, Ms. Lee aims to introduce audiences to "unusual" and occasionally underperformed pieces, interspersed with the familiar, to create a "moving" experience. In the end, it is a "conversation" between herself and the audience and a "synergetic collaboration."

"I want to use this evening as a musical adventure and hopefully I will be a very good guide," she says. "I hope at the end of the concert the audience comes away with being in touch with the essentials of life, the beauty of art, and with an excitement to find new jewels that maybe they were not aware of before within these pieces.

Soyeon Kate Lee returns to the Aurora Cultural Centre this Friday, March 11, at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$34 for adults, and \$28 for seniors and students. For more information, visit www.auroraculturalcentre.ca.