

PROGRAM NOTES

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791): Sonata for Violin and Piano, K. 526 (1787)

Mozart's earliest violin sonatas belong to the tradition of keyboard sonatas for the amateur, to which a violin, flute, or sometimes a cello could be added. In fact, his violin sonatas were frequently called piano sonatas with violin accompaniment! Yet in the sonata K. 526 – his next-to-last for the keyboard/string duo and a close contemporary of the opera "Don Giovanni" – the piano and violin are truly equal partners. In light of the brilliance of the Sonata's piano part, however, there is reason to suspect that Mozart had himself in mind when writing the work. Especially in the first movement the piano is downright brilliant, with more than just a few showoff passages. The violin soon enough has its way with the main idea, with the supporting part going to the piano, and from that point on there is plenty of give and take between the instruments. The weaving of contrapuntal elements throughout reminds us of Mozart's love of Bach.

The Andante movement is remarkable for its spare texture and great emotional depth. Mozart never ceases to amaze in his ability to create such expressive music with deceptively simple means. The final movement is a high-spirited rondo, and although one of Mozart's longest in a chamber work, speeds by at a presto tempo. It has been pointed out that the movement is based on the finale of Carl Friedrich Abel's A major Violin Sonata, op. 5, no. 5, a composer the child Mozart had met and admired in London. Abel died in June of 1787, so it is quite possible Mozart uses the theme as a memorial tribute.

Notes by Steve Siegel

Jean Françaix (1912-1997): String Trio (1933)

Françaix viewed himself as pursuing the twofold aims of national tradition and a practical application of these traditions. He resembles Ravel in that his music represents a stylization of the classic French way. He was a student of Nadia Boulanger who, while not a great composer herself, knew how to draw out of her students whatever latent abilities they had. The list of her students is impressive. Among others, there are Aaron Copland, Roy Harris and Walter Piston. Françaix quickly assimilated all that he needed to learn and, having done that, he evolved but little. As a result, there are no early, middle and late phases in his output. He has a special gift for expressing the freshness and wonder of childhood. Influences on his style are Ravel, Poulenc and the Stravinsky of the Rite of Spring. These elements have been integrated into a very individual art—highly polished and classically reserved.

Notes by Hoyle Carpenter

Richard Strauss (1864-1949): Piano Quartet in C Minor, Op. 13 (1883-84)

The late Romantic period (end of the nineteenth century) afforded the composer a vast number of possible procedures that were brought about by heterogeneity of musical thinking. There was a lack of a unifying general style. Cf. the unity of style in Haydn and Mozart, and Palestrina and Lassus with the wide difference between Brahms and Wagner.

Son of a horn player, Strauss was born in the same year that Wagner came to live in the Bavarian capital at the invitation of Ludwig II (mad Ludwig). Father Strauss, an uncompromising classicist, hated Wagner's music and saw to it that his son was continuously under the influence of the classics. This probably accounts for the lack, in his early works, of the audacious qualities that we find in his later works. Chamber music is a small part of his output. His best-known works are the operas Salomé, shocking and controversial for many years, the lovable Rosenkavalier plus the tone-poems Don Juan, Death and Transfiguration and Till Eulenspiegel.

In 1933, the Nazi government put Strauss in charge of the Kulturkammer but removed him when differences of opinion developed about Nazi ideologies. In 1948, a denazification court cleared him of all charges of collaboration.

In contrast to the orchestral tone poems, there is no extra-musical program in the piano quartet. The first movement is a large-scale piece with extensive development of ideas—a big

sonata form. The second movement is a fast-moving piece that requires agile fingers. It is in the expected minuet and trio form. The following andante is a very expressive, emotional piece with a wide range of dynamics. The last movement is a fast moving, intense sonata form. The piano quartet won first prize in a competition. He wrote to his parents, “300 marks!” He was still a young man, twenty years old.

Notes by Hoyle Carpenter

Musicians:

Cyrus Beroukhim, violin - Cyrus is Concertmaster of the American Symphony and plays as associate principal viola with the New York City Ballet Orchestra. He has performed at the Ravinia, Verbier, Norfolk, Sarasota and Keshet Eilon Festivals and with the Rose String Quartet and America’s Dream Chamber Artists. And, he has toured to Taiwan, Germany, Luxembourg and Japan and has appeared at the Museum of Modern Art’s Summergarden concert series. As a member of the Zukovsky Quartet, he explored the music of living composers. He has the doctorate from the Juilliard School and is Associate Professor of Violin at New York University.

Emily Daggett Smith, violin - Emily Daggett Smith has appeared at Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Zankel Hall, Weill Hall, and Symphony Space in New York; Disney Hall in Los Angeles, and Symphony Hall in Boston. She is the founding first violinist of the Tessera Quartet and the West End Trio, and has appeared on PBS's national broadcast, Live from Lincoln Center, as well as twice on NPR's From the Top. She has performed as soloist with the Juilliard Orchestra and with the New York Classical Players.

Brett Deubner, viola – Brett Deubner has received worldwide critical acclaim for his powerful intensity and sumptuous tone. Recent performances include concerto appearances with over 40 orchestras on 4 continents including the Grand Rapids Symphony, the Thuringer Symphoniker in Saalfeld, Germany, New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, the Knoxville Symphony, the Grainger Wind Symphony in Melbourne, the Filharmonico del Quito, String Orchestra of the Rockies, the National Symphony of Ecuador, Orchestra Bell’Arte of Paris, Peninsula Symphony of California and the Kiev Camerata in Ukraine. To date, over 80 works for viola including over 30 viola concerti and numerous solo and chamber works for viola have been dedicated to and premiered by him.

Alberto Parrini, cello - Born in Italy, Alberto Parrini has been principal cellist of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Philharmonic since 2007 and a member of the American Symphony since 2010; he also performs regularly with the New York Philharmonic and Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. In 2008, 2010 and 2011 he toured Japan as principal cellist of the New York Symphonic Ensemble. He performed throughout the U.S. with the American Chamber Players and with the St. Lawrence String Quartet. He toured with the White Oak Dance Project and performed with Continuum, Proteus Ensemble, New Jersey Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra and Metamorphosen Chamber Orchestra. He teaches at Princeton University and during the summer at Kinhaven Music School.

Marcantonio Barone, piano – Marcantonio Barone has performed with major orchestras on four continents and has given solo recitals at the Wigmore Hall in London, the Great Hall of the Saint Petersburg Filarmoniya, Weill Recital Hall in New York, and the National Gallery in Washington, and on the recital series of the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society. He has been a member of the Lenape Chamber Ensemble since 1987, and he performs annually as a member of 1807 and Friends and the Craftsbury Chamber Players. He teaches at the Bryn Mawr Conservatory of Music and at Swarthmore College. His recordings are available on the Albany, Bridge, Centaur, and Innova labels. Mr. Barone is a Steinway Artist.

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