

UMC Concert Series

presents

PINCHAS ZUKERMAN, Violin

MARC NEIKRUG, Piano

Sonata in B Flat Major, K. 454 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Largo - Allegro
Andante
Allegretto

Sonata No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 75 Camille Saint-Saëns

Allegro agitato; Adagio
Allegretto moderato; Allegro molto

Intermission

Sonata No. 9 in A Major, Op. 47 Ludwig van Beethoven
(The "Kreutzer")

Adagio sostenuto - Presto
Andante con variazioni
Finale: Presto

November 1, 1982



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Members of the audience are respectfully requested to refrain from coughing, if at all possible, while the artists are performing. The Concert Series Office has received several complaints about distracting noises during concerts, and we do not want to lessen anyone's enjoyment of the evening. Cough drops are available at the Box Office.

Bill Bondeson

CONCERT PREVIEWS will be given at 7:00 p.m. in the Recital Hall of the Fine Arts Building on Monday, November 15, before the Santiago Rodriguez concert and on Friday, December 3, before the choral concert.

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Like many entries in the music lexicon, the term sonata has undergone its own evolution in meaning and connotation. It initially gained currency at the end of the sixteenth century to distinguish between pieces of instrumental music--"sound pieces"--from the much more common pieces for voices or voices and instruments. For more than a century it was used as a generic title with considerable latitude by composers to designate a great variety of instrumental compositions. The most fundamental characteristic of our modern understanding of a sonata--the juxtaposition of several sections of contrasting and yet complementary nature--was, however, among the kinds of pieces so labelled from the period of its earliest usage. In the second half of the eighteenth century, because of the example of such composers as C. P. E. Bach, Joseph Haydn, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, a modified and, from a historical perspective, much narrower set of musical conventions became associated with the term; these conventions have tended to dominate instrumental music for most performance forces into the twentieth century. One explanation for the durability and perennial attraction of the musical solutions of the Viennese classicists, perhaps, concerns the inherent opportunities in those solutions for composers to exhibit the widest range of compositional skills, for performers to demonstrate command of the resulting musical diversity, and for listeners to be gratified by both.

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One of only a handful of composers in the history of music to be able to perform with public success either part of his own violin sonatas, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) composed works in that genre throughout his brief, but brilliant career. Sonata in B Flat Major, K. 454 (1784), one of his last four violin sonatas, stands out from those before it as the first in which a sense of true equilibrium between the two musical protagonists is achieved. This sonata, unlike many of the earlier ones, moreover, was not intended for an amateur. The composer prepared the work with the young and talented Italian violinist Regina Strinasacchi in mind. She, with Mozart at the keyboard, presented its premiere at the National Court Theatre in Vienna on April 29, 1784. This work is a fine example of Mozart's mature style--a variety of melodies, phrase structures, textures, and harmonic constructions put together with Mozartean elegance.

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Among nineteenth-century composers, individuals who exhibited a high level of appreciation and accomplishments in non-musical endeavors, Camille Saint-Saëns was, perhaps, the "renaissance man." His musical credentials alone are impressive. Widely celebrated as a pianist of the first order, hailed by Liszt as "the greatest organist in the world," beloved as a strict but inspiring teacher, and accepted by the age of thirty-six years as the dean of French composers, he was also an early defender of the controversial German music of Schumann, Liszt, and Wagner as well as a benefactor of promising Frenchmen, a musicologist with practical interests in the music of Bach, Handel, Rameau, Gluck, and Mozart, and a prolific writer on musical topics. In addition, he diverted considerable energy for his lively study of archeology, astronomy, acoustics, philosophy, botany, and literature, making more than amateur contributions to most of these fields.

As a composer, Saint-Saëns wrote in most of the genres available to him--he was, for example, the first established composer to write music for film (1908), but today he is primarily remembered by his instrumental works of the 1870s and 1880s, works combining classical models and romantic procedures. The latter are well represented in Sonata No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 75, (1885) by returning thematic material in unexpected order, by reusing thematic material in later movements, and by joining movements together (final cadences with silence follow movements two and four). Although in his day he was criticized for attempting to reconcile German ideas with the French, he is perceived today as the embodiment of the French national tradition with its relative emotional restraint, its neat and orderly constructions, and its concern for sonorities and orchestral nuance.

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I have been feeling, I may say, stronger and better, but my ears continue to hum and buzz day and night. I must confess that I lead a miserable life. For almost two years I have ceased to attend any social functions, just because I find it impossible to say to people: I am deaf. . . . Already I have often cursed my Creator and my existence. Plutarch has shown me the path of resignation. If it is at all possible, I will bid defiance to my fate, though I feel that as long as I live there will be moments when I shall be God's most unhappy creature. . . . Resignation, what a wretched resource! Yet it is all that is left to me. . . .

These words were written by Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) during the time he was composing works now considered transitional to his second style period, which saw the creation of many of his popular masterpieces. His Sonata No. 9 in A Major, Op. 47, is the terminal work of this transition.

The sonata has immortalized the name of the violinist Rodolphe Kreutzer (1766-1831) although he never performed it. The premiere was given, from manuscript, by the twenty-four-year-old mulatto violinist George Palgreen Bridgetower (1780-1869) with Beethoven at the keyboard with an incomplete copy of the score. The composer had proposed the work to Bridgetower for his much publicized debut in Vienna, but after a successful first performance, the two suffered a disagreement that caused Beethoven to deprive the violinist of the tribute of dedication.

Beethoven emphasized the virtuosic element in the music by inscribing the sonata: "Written in a concertante style, like a concerto." The first movement is a powerful study in compositional enterprise, a monumental treatment of sonata form. The slow movement is a theme with four successively brilliant variations. The finale is a stylized tarantella, an Italian dance with jerking 6/8 rhythmic patterns. The work exudes the freedom assumed by Beethoven that was to influence all composers after him--the freedom to exploit the conventions established by Haydn and Mozart, the freedom to write music for idealized performers and listeners, the freedom to explore the boundaries of musical expression--in essence, the freedom to please himself, "God's most unhappy creature."

Notes by Michael J. Budds