

Bay Chamber Concerts
Vonsattel, Nuttall and Costanza
July 21, 2016

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Violin Sonata in G Major, K. 379

Adagio - Allegro

Andantino Cantabile [Theme and Variations]

Allegretto

In March, 1781, Mozart was summoned to Vienna by his employer, Hieronymous Colloredo, Archbishop of Salzburg, who was attending the celebrations for the installation of Emperor Joseph II. The 25-year-old composer was offended when the archbishop treated him as a mere servant – he had to live with the household staff and dine at the servants' table. Further, the archbishop liked the prestige of appearing in society with Mozart in tow as his domestic virtuoso, but he denied Mozart permission to give a public concert or play on his own in any other residence.

Mozart's frustration reached the breaking point when the archbishop forbade him to perform before the Emperor for a fee equal to half of Mozart's yearly Salzburg salary. When the archbishop announced his plans to return to Salzburg in June, Mozart asked permission to remain in Vienna. The furious archbishop refused to grant or deny his request. For better or worse, Mozart decided to remain in Vienna, and, according to a letter to his father, he was dismissed "with a kick in the ass" administered by the archbishop's steward. Vienna remained his residence for the remaining ten years of his life.

Mozart was now jobless, in debt to his father, living in the country's busy and costly capital city, without his street-wise father to make contacts for him, and with his years as a child prodigy far behind him. The immediate task was to find ways to make a living. He did this aggressively on three fronts – as a performer, as a teacher and as a composer.

As a performer, drawing on contacts he had made in Salzburg, he participated in, or had works performed, at various concerts. By the end of 1781, he had established himself as the finest keyboard player in Vienna with an unmatched gift for improvising. In July, he won a contract for composing a new opera, *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, which premiered the following year to enormous acclaim. And in

December, at the instigation of the emperor, he won an informal improvising contest with his rival Muzio Clementi.

As a teacher, he was hired by four affluent families to teach their children. One student was the 23-year-old Josepha Auernhammer, who became infatuated with Mozart, an affection that was not returned since he had already met his future wife, Constanza Weber. However, she was a competent pianist, and in November she joined Mozart in a concert, sponsored by her father, for which Mozart composed his Sonata for Two Pianos, K. 448.

As a composer, Mozart quickly established contacts with Vienna's music publishers, and in July he persuaded Artaria, the leading house, to issue his future compositions. As a starter, Artaria suggested six violin sonatas to feed the growing market for sheet music to be played in Viennese homes. Mozart dusted off two sonatas composed before his coming to Vienna and produced four more, and they were published in November. The sonatas were well received by both pre-publication subscribers and the general public, and in the next ten years Artaria was to publish 30 more Mozart first editions.

The sonatas were an important milestone in the history of the violin sonata form. Previously, the harpsichord/piano had been the featured instrument in duet sonatas with the violin in an accompaniment role. With these sonatas, the piano came first in the title, and the music still contained pages in which the violin part could be omitted without damaging the sense of the music. However, the violin now carried essential material and dialogued as an equal with the piano.

K. 379 was one of the four sonatas that Mozart composed in Vienna. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about its composition was that Mozart claimed to have written it in one hour. Mozart makes the claim in a letter to his father dated April 8, 1781:

Today we had a concert, where three of my compositions were performed -- new ones, of course, a Rondo for Brunetti; a sonata with violin accompaniment for myself, which I composed last night between eleven and twelve (but in order to be able to finish it, I only wrote out the violin part for Brunetti and retained my own part in my head), and then the other for Ceccarelli...

Mozart scholars have identified the sonata as K. 379, and have pointed out the documentary evidence to support Mozart's claim: Unlike most of Mozart's scores, the manuscript is messy, using two different types of paper, and notating some passages

in brown ink, others in almost black ink, and still others with two layers of ink, one superimposed on the other.

Notwithstanding the haste in which it was written, the sonata, in two movements, is one of Mozart's most effective compositions. The first movement is in two contrasting sections. First we hear a long and powerful *adagio* introduction in G major featuring dense chords and broad arpeggio figures. This is followed by an *allegro* in G minor in which the two instruments engage in an impassioned dialogue with driving rhythms.

The second movement, *andantino cantabile*, is a theme and five variations. The theme is simple and beautiful enough to stand on its own, and the variations challenge the performing skills of both instruments. The movement closes with a restatement of the theme and a coda featuring brilliant figurations for the piano.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Sonata No. 2 in F Major for Cello and Piano, Op. 99

Allegro vivace

Adagio affettuoso

Allegro passionato

Allegro molto

When struggling with a new composition, Brahms liked to be in rural rather than urban surroundings, preferably in a setting of some natural beauty, and he favored summer working vacations. His habit was to work out the music in his head during early morning walks through the countryside, and then to sketch out his ideas on paper in the afternoon. He left the revisions and final editing until after his return to Vienna.

For the summer of 1886, he chose a site in Switzerland – the village of Hofstetten, on the Lake of Thun, not far from Bern. From the windows of his rented villa, he enjoyed a breathtaking view of the lake and, in the distance, of the glaciers of the Bernese Oberland. He was so taken with the place that he invited a number of his friends to join him, and he returned for the next two summers. In that first summer, he composed three chamber works – this Cello Sonata, the Second Violin Sonata and the Third Piano Trio.

The Cello Sonata is one of the most difficult works in the cello repertory. Brahms had written an earlier cello sonata, Op. 38, some 20 years previously, but Op. 99 was a

major advance in the adventurous use of the instrument. Brahms gave the piano a truly virtuoso part, requiring the cellist to project an usually strong tone simply to hold his or her own. Further, he set a new standard in exploiting the instrument's higher register and in its use of *pizzicato*, the plucking of strings, and *tremolo*, the rapid vibrating repetition of a single tone, interval or chord.

In the first movement, *allegro vivace*, the demands on the cellist are clear from the opening measure. The cello presents a leaping theme over a thunderous tremolo in the piano; the tremolo then becomes the dominant feature of the movement for both instruments. The development is ingeniously based on it – first, it becomes a whispering piano background for a reflective version of the cello theme; then the piano develops it into a more rhythmically defined form; and finally, the tremolo transfers to the cello, while the piano restates the cello theme in soft, sustained chords.

The main theme of the second movement, *adagio affettuoso*, is a solemn procession – the piano presents the theme against plodding pizzicato chords in the cello. Both elements will be important in what follows, with a dramatic use of the pizzicato in both the high and low registers of the cello. The second theme is more relaxed.

The third movement, *allegro passionato*, begins with a prolonged and subdued piano passage. Abruptly the cello emerges from its low register into high agitation, and the violent outbursts continue. The trio, in contrast, features one of those broad melodies with which Brahms often relieved the tension.

After three such demanding movements, the fourth movement, *allegro molto*, a rondo, seems downright light-hearted, and even a darker episode midway through the movement cannot alter the impression of a deliberate change of pace.

Robert Schumann (1810-1839) **Arabesque in C Major, Op. 18**

An "arabesque" was a term commonly used in the 19th century for the florid ornamentation found in Arabic art and architecture. In music, it was used for a passage or whole composition whose melody is flowing, highly decorated and marked by intricate figurations.

Schumann wrote his only "arabesque" while visiting Vienna in the winter of 1838-1839. At the time, he was courting Clara Wieck, and they were considering moving

from Leipzig to Vienna as a more likely site for the music journal of which he was the editor and for her career as a concert pianist. Lonely and home sick, he busied himself writing a series of piano pieces including this Arabesque for commercial publication. Reflecting his desire to reach amateurs, Schumann termed the Arabesque and the other pieces "Frail things for ladies."

The Arabesque is in rondo form -- that is, a repeated refrain with two contrasting minor-key episodes. The refrain is one of Schumann most winning melodies, and the episodes are highly ornamented extensions of that melody. The work then ends with a melancholy coda.

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)
Piano Trio No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 63

Mit Energie und Leidenschaft
Lebhaft, doch nicht zu rasch
Langsam, mit inniger Empfindung - Bewegter - Tempo I - attacca
Mit Feuer - Nach und nach schneller

In the early years of the nineteenth century, another breakthrough in the development of the piano came with the introduction of the sustaining or damper pedal. The pedal made it possible for the performer to sustain notes and chords, to cut them short, or to play them in a smoother legato style. Equally important, the pedal expanded the piano's sonorities by making its full body of strings available for sympathetic resonance.

Beethoven was the first to exploit the piano's expanded resources. Subsequent composers furthered the trend, recognizing the instrument's capacity for communicating the intensely personal expression that characterized musical romanticism. Schumann and Mendelssohn were particularly skillful in blending the piano's sound with those of stringed instruments in chamber music.

Robert and Clara Schumann had a truly musical marriage. Clara was a gifted concert pianist, and Robert composed some of his finest music for her performance and took care of their home and eight children while she was on tour. Further, he was her mentor when she tried her hand at composition, and they studied counterpoint together to strengthen their compositional skills.

In 1846, while they were living in Dresden, Clara composed a piano trio, embodying some of the contrapuntal techniques they had learned together. Robert was so taken

with the form that in the following year he composed two piano trios of his own, also making extensive use of counterpoint.

The first trio, which we hear this evening, was published in 1848 and the second in 1849. According to Schumann, they were intended as a complementary pair; the first was composed "at a time of gloomy moods," while the second "makes a friendlier and more ingratiating effect." Further they departed from convention in having the tempo markings of the four movements in descriptive German rather than Italian, and the markings are presented here in English translations.

The first movement, "With energy and passion", is in the usual sonata form with two themes, their development and their recapitulation. In this case, however, the first theme, presented at the outset by the violin and cello, is strangely veiled and subdued, and the movement rises to a *fortissimo* only for one brief moment during the coda.

Further the development section is double the length of the exposition. It is stretched out by coming to a pregnant pause and then injecting a third theme seasoned with chromatics (half-steps). Schumann marks the section to be played by the violin and cello near the bridge, resulting in a change in tone quality. With the recapitulation and coda, the movement rises to a full-blown romantic climax.

The second movement is the scherzo, labeled "Lively but not too fast." The main section is seasoned repeatedly by the driving theme, an ascending scale in an insistent dotted rhythm. In contrast, the trio has a smoothly rising and falling theme and returns without a pause to the main section.

The third movement, "Slow, with intimate feeling," conveys a sense of world-weariness. The long first theme is presented by the first violin initially while the cello rests. The change from minor major in the central portion of the movement only increases the music's sense of yearning.

The tension is relieved only by the entry, without pause, of the fourth movement, "With fire," one of Schumann's most full-throated romantic compositions. There are two themes, the first exuberant and the second more quiet and moving. The tension builds leading to one of the most exciting endings in Schumann's music.