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# Gala 75th Birthday Concert: George Neikrug, September 29, 1994

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS

PRESENTS

GALA 75TH BIRTHDAY CONCERT

GEORGE NEIKRUG, *cello*

WITH

FABIO PARRINI, *piano*



THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1994, AT 8 P.M.

THE TSAI PERFORMANCE CENTER, 685 COMMONWEALTH AVENUE, BOSTON



*Boston University School for the Arts*  
— *Music Division* —

Mr. Parrini was unable to play in the  
concert this evening.

Pianist Kathleen Forgac will be  
performing with Mr. Neikrug.

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PROGRAM

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PART I. Original Works for Cello

Prelude	Emanuel Moór (1863–1931)
<i>For Zara Nelsova</i>	
Chant Triste and Oriental Dance	Anton Arensky (1861–1906)
Prayer	Ernest Bloch (1880–1959)
Petite Valse	Victor Herbert (1859–1924)
Two Concert Etudes	David Popper (1843–1913)
Jagdstück Spinnlied	
Serenade	David Popper
<i>Remembering Emanuel Feuermann</i>	
Elfentanz	David Popper
Toccata for George	Fred Katz (b. 1919)

—Brief Intermission—

## PART II. Transcriptions

Adagio  
Johann Sebastian Bach  
(1685–1750)

*Remembering Pablo Casals*

Valse Sentimentale  
Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky  
(1840–1893)

*Remembering Gregor Piatigorsky*

Etude  
(arr. Glazunov)  
Fryderyk Chopin  
(1810–1849)

*Remembering Ossip Giskin*

Tambourin Chinois  
Fritz Kreisler  
(1875–1962)

*Remembering Fritz Kreisler*

—Brief Pause—

Grand Adagio  
from the ballet *Raymonda*  
Alexander Glazunov  
(1865–1936)

*For Oscar Shumsky*

Hungarian Dance No. 1  
Johannes Brahms  
(1833–1897)

*Remembering Toscha Seidel*

Nocturne in E-flat  
(arr. Sarasate)  
Fryderyk Chopin

*Remembering D. C. Dounis*

The Song Is You  
(arr. Kaufman/Katz)  
Jerome Kern  
(1885–1945)

*Remembering Louis Kaufman*

Scherzo Tarantelle  
Henryk Wieniawski  
(1835–1880)

*Remembering Jascha Heifetz*

# BIRTHDAY TRIBUTES

by George Neikrug

As the number seventy-five seems to be somewhat of a milestone (a fact that I seem unaware of until I accidentally glance in a mirror), some sort of retrospective musical occasion seems in order. I decided to do a concert where I pay tribute to some of the string players, friends, mentors, and colleagues who have influenced my playing, both musically and technically. Unfortunately, I could not include all those who deserved to be mentioned, as that would entail another hour of music.

I have chosen pieces that have been identified with each of these players and will attempt to adjust my own style a little in the direction of the players mentioned. The first part of the program will be compositions originally written for the cello. The succeeding portions will all be transcriptions.

## I. Zara Nelsova

The first time I heard Zara Nelsova play was in a recital at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, where I was teaching. The year was 1947 and the first piece on the program was the Prelude by Emanuel Moór. Her playing seemed to have all the qualities I had been working for and I figuratively turned green with envy. Since that time, we have become good friends and I recently phoned her when I was planning this program. I accused her of being unfair to all cellists because I had just been listening to a recording she had made of this piece when she was in her twenties. I told her that she made it impossible for anyone else to play it. There was not one sound or fingering that I would ever want to change. I may do one or two different fingerings just so as not to appear a complete copycat. This is simply the kind of playing one rarely hears today.

## II. Emanuel Feuermann

I heard Feuermann's first recital in New York in the thirties. I was so stunned that I put my cello away and refused to play for months. I had always imagined that someday a person would appear who could play the cello with all the virtuosity and elegance of a Jascha Heifetz but had never expected to witness it in person. I studied with him for three years until his untimely death. He just did not live long enough to have the same influence on cellists that Heifetz has on violinists. I have a wonderful 78 recording of the Popper Serenade where he made some minor changes to make it a better piece. It is his version that I shall play. I consider him the major cellistic influence on my own work.

## III. Fred Katz

Fred Katz and I both played in the National Orchestral Society Orchestra of New York. We were two young cellists, fifteen years of age. The next time I saw him was many years later in my Hollywood days, at a recording session where he was the conductor and arranger. Since then he has written many compositions for me. The *Tocatta for George* was written in 1960, when I mentioned to him that I was leaving for a European recital tour and could use an effective closing piece for my program. In his usual style, he needed only a few days to come up with this piece.

#### IV. Pablo Casals

To the cellists of my generation, the first great influence were the recordings of Casals and especially the Adagio in C Major of Bach. The noble sustained sound, perfect intonation, and almost religious fervor of his expression were an inspiration to us. He is the only person on my list of tributes whom I never knew personally. I did, however, observe him at master classes.

#### V. Ossip Giskin

Ossip Giskin is a name that is totally unfamiliar to the last couple of musical generations. He was a colorful Russian-born cellist who was my boss on my first steady job. This was a position as staff cellist for the orchestra of radio station WOR in New York. Ossip was the contractor and first cellist. (There were only three.) Previously, I had heard him play solos on the radio and I can never forget his performance of the Chopin-Glazunov Etude. He had a cello which cost him forty-five dollars from which he produced the most magnificent tone and phrasing that I have ever heard. The spiritual quality of his playing seemed to be helped by spirits of a liquid variety. His tone was so huge that whenever he had a solo cadenza (the type that occurs in many light music overtures such as von Suppé's), there seemed to be no loss of volume when the orchestra dropped out and one cello was left playing. I would sit next to him and marvel at this ocean of sound coming from his instrument. I was in my early twenties at this time and he acted like a stern mentor to me. Whenever the cello section was rehearsing a solo line, he would hit my hand with his bow and in a deep Russian accent would admonish me not to "play like Chaliapin." This was the famous Russian bass with whom he had toured as assisting artist.

#### VI. Gregor Piatigorsky

Gregor Piatigorsky was our cellistic hero after Casals. He played with great flair and total commitment to his musical ideas. His colorful personality placed him at the opposite end of the spectrum from Feuermann, who was the other major influence at that time and extremely self-effacing in contrast.

#### VII. Oscar Shumsky

In the 1930s, when I was a teenager, there were weekly broadcasts of student recitals from the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. The first time I heard the name Shumsky was during one of these broadcasts, when he played the Grand Adagio by Glazunov. This performance made a deep impression on me, and years later I had the pleasure of playing chamber music with him. And also I taught his son Eric at a summer course.

I consider him one of the most gifted violinists of my generation. His style is more influenced by Kreisler than by any other violinist of the past, which in itself makes him unique.

#### VIII. Fritz Kreisler

In my early teens in New York, giants like Kreisler and Rachmaninoff were always playing recitals and one took for granted that they would be around forever, so I always put off attending a Kreisler concert. For the first eighteen years of my life I lived in the Bronx about two blocks away from Poe Park, where the original cottage of Edgar Allen Poe stood. To my shame, I must

confess that even though I was a fan of Poe, I never took the time to visit the cottage, thinking I could always do it later. This was the same situation regarding Kreisler until a friend of mine, Walter Eisenberg, insisted I go to hear him.

I can remember that day as vividly as if it were yesterday. It was a Saturday afternoon and I climbed to the last row in the highest balcony in Carnegie Hall. I was flustered because I was late, thinking that the concert started at three o'clock, when Kreisler always started at two-thirty. He was already in the middle of the César Franck Sonata, and within two minutes the tears were streaming down my face as if I were a little baby. There was almost a religious atmosphere in the hall and one could imagine a halo around his head.

The beauty of his sound cannot be described. The audience seemed like one big family and when they were not weeping, they were tapping their toes to the music. He has, to this day, remained my greatest idol. Whenever I feel a little tired or jaded from the pressures of professional life, all I have to do is put on a Kreisler record and immediately I want to take out my cello and play. Curiously, Joseph Silverstein told me that he has the same reaction.

### IX. Demetrius C. Dounis

If one were to fantasize about the existence of a dream teacher—one who had all the answers about how to achieve technical and musical perfection, and how to cope with any possible difficulties that might arise in one's playing career—that description would apply to D. C. Dounis. He was a combination of a wonderful musician and a scientific genius. He was trained to be a medical doctor, so everything in his method had a sound anatomical and psychological basis.

At the time I became a pupil of his, I had practically given up any thought of a solo career because of my physical problems with the cello. I consider becoming his pupil the luckiest event of my musical life. I stayed with him for fifteen years until he died in 1955, and he gave me such a great body of information that I feel I have been studying with him on a daily basis ever since. Everything I have been able to accomplish in playing or teaching I owe to him, and my debt is so great that I have felt that my main mission in life is to help others with the knowledge he gave me, as a way of repaying him. He had a second career as a mandolin virtuoso, and I have in my possession an old Columbia record of him playing a superb performance of this Chopin Nocturne in E-flat.

### X. Toscha Seidel

Carl Flesch said that the great triumvirate of violin pupils of Leopold Auer were Elman, Heifetz, and Seidel. Toscha came to America, unfortunately one year after his fellow student Heifetz had made the most sensational debut of any violinist in New York and reaped all the rewards of a great solo career. Although Toscha was of equal stature, he never achieved the fame and career he deserved.

When his mother died, he lost interest in concertizing and settled in Los Angeles, where his glorious playing went into recording background music for films. For ten years, he was the concertmaster of the Paramount Pictures studio orchestra and I was the principal cellist. Many times we had alternating solos in film scores and I had to imitate his wonderful tone. I also played chamber

music with him weekly for those ten years and had the great fortune to perform the Brahms Double Concerto with him twice.

The inspiration and learning experience of those days still lives with me today. Now, a few words about playing for films. It was necessary to have the ability to produce a glamorous tone whenever called upon to play a solo, which might be only two or three notes. This situation could occur at odd times of the day or night. If anything went amiss, there would be an embarrassing moment when the sequence was played back through giant loudspeakers immediately after, and you had to suffer with the knowledge that your colleagues in the orchestra were listening with critical ears.

This was really wonderful training. Everyone was trying to play like Heifetz or Kreisler, the prevailing influences of the time—and, incidentally, my own favorites. When I listen to tapes of my playing from this period, I like them more than anything I have done since.

Having a great artist like Toscha to observe on a daily basis is one of my most treasured memories. The Brahms First Hungarian Dance was one of his specialties and there is a wonderful recording of it on long-playing record.

### **XI. Louis Kaufman**

Louis Kaufman was the leading glamorous violin soloist of Hollywood film music. His tone sounded like a fusion of Heifetz, Kreisler, and Elman. In my Hollywood period, I played many chamber music concerts and several recordings with him. He was a gentle soul, extremely intelligent, with a wide range of interests and an avid art collector. When I read recently in *The New York Times* that he had died, I pulled out an old cassette of him playing an arrangement of "The Song Is You," by Jerome Kern. I must confess that I wept unashamedly while listening to that beautiful sound. I wrote to his wife and told her that I wanted to play this arrangement as a memorial to him. She answered that the arrangement was improvised at the time of the recording and that there was no manuscript. The version I am playing is one made for me by Fred Katz.

### **XII. Jascha Heifetz**

It is common knowledge that he is the greatest violinist of modern times. His style and technical wizardry have influenced countless string players more than any other figure. One of the most uncomfortable moments of my life was during a reading of the Schubert Quintet in C Major with Isaac Stern at a private party in Beverly Hills. Heifetz walked in the door midway through the piece and situated himself right behind my back, watching the music over my shoulder! His recording of the Scherzo Tarantella was the inspiration for my determination to play it on the cello.

## MEET THE ARTISTS



George Neikrug, *cello*

The artistry and virtuosity of George Neikrug have been known for many years to his fellow musicians and the music-loving public. Although his first love has always been solo playing, his commitment to teaching has resulted in a solo career too sporadic to achieve the world-wide recognition he deserves.

Born in New York, Mr. Neikrug was a pupil of the legendary Emanuel Feuermann and is probably the only surviving student who is still concertizing. In 1943, he met the well-known pedagogue D. C. Dounis, whose revolutionary approach to the problems of string playing and teaching influenced him to completely revamp his playing and to create the unique style he has retained to this day. This association lasted for fifteen years; Mr. Neikrug felt such a debt to Dounis for the knowledge and skills he had acquired that he resolved to devote his life to teaching at such schools as Boston University and by giving master classes all over the world.

Mr. Neikrug made his debut in New York in 1947. Since then, he has held principal positions with the Baltimore, Pittsburgh, and Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestras. He was also principal cellist of the Paramount Pictures Recording Orchestra and the Columbia Recording Orchestra. In 1960 Leopold Stokowski asked him to perform Bloch's *Schelomo* with Stokowski and the NBC Symphony at Carnegie Hall; a recording for United Artists followed. Mr. Neikrug has concertized in major cities throughout Europe and the United States. In 1979 he performed all six Bach solo suites in one concert at Lincoln Center. In an enthusiastic review, John Rockwell of *The New York Times* concluded, "There was a beauty that was almost painful. We wish Mr. Neikrug would play all the violin suites for us."

In 1962 he taught at the Hochschule in Frankfurt as a Fulbright Professor, sponsored by Ernst Toch and Bruno Walter. He held teaching positions at the Detmold Hochschule in Germany, Oberlin College, and the University of Texas at Austin before joining the faculty of Boston University School for the Arts in 1971. George Neikrug has been selected to receive the 1995 "Artist Teacher Award" from the American String Teachers Association.



Fabio Parrini, *piano*

Fabio Parrini has performed in recital, with orchestras, in chamber groups, and on radio and TV recordings in the United States, Italy, Switzerland, and South Africa, with a wide repertoire ranging from baroque to contemporary music.

Mr. Parrini graduated *cum laude* from the Conservatory of Padua and won first prize in six Italian national competitions. He came to Boston on a Fulbright Grant and Fellowship and remained at the Boston University School for the Arts on full scholarship for five years. At Boston University he won the Richmond Piano Competition and a Kahn Career Entry Award while earning a Master of Music degree and an Artist Diploma. Shortly afterward, he won prizes at the International Competition of Cagliari and the National Competition of Treviso, Italy.

The most influential teachers in his development have been Anthony di Bonaventura and Micaela Mingardo. He has also studied with György Sándor and Bruno Mezzena, and has taught piano at several state conservatories in Italy.

Boston University School for the Arts

**Upcoming Events**

**September 30 at 8 p.m.**

School for the Arts Faculty Concert

Tong-Il Han, *piano*

Beethoven: Sonata in E Major, op. 109

Sonata in A-flat Major, op. 110

Sonata in C Minor, op. 111

Concert Hall, School for the Arts, 855 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston

Free Admission

**October 7 at 8 p.m.**

School for the Arts Faculty Concert

Maria Clodes Jaguaribe, *piano*

The Tsai Performance Center, 685 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston

Free Admission

**October 11 at 8 p.m.**

Boston University Symphony Orchestra

David Hoose, *conductor*

The Tsai Performance Center, 685 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston

Free Admission

**October 14 at 8 p.m.**

Early Music Series

The Tsai Performance Center, 685 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston

Admission: \$8 general public; \$3 seniors, B.U. alumni, non-B.U. students;  
free to B.U. faculty, staff, and students with I.D.

**October 19 at 8 p.m.**

School for the Arts Faculty Concert

Bayla Keyes, *violin*, and Maria Clodes Jaguaribe, *piano*

Beethoven: Sonatas for Violin and Piano

Op. 24 in F Major

Op. 30 No. 1 in A Major

Op. 30 No. 2 in C Minor

The Tsai Performance Center, 685 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston

Free Admission

*and in November . . .*

**November 19 at 8 p.m.**

**Boston University presents legendary choral conductor**

**Robert Shaw in a Benefit Concert**

Mr. Shaw will conduct the Boston University Symphonic Chorus and Orchestra in Beethoven's Mass in C Major, op. 86, and *Fantasia*, op. 80 (*Choral Fantasy*). All proceeds will benefit the Robert Shaw Institute, a consortium of Boston University, the Ohio State University, and University of California, Los Angeles.

The Tsai Performance Center, 685 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston

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