2001-12-17

Faculty Concert, Bayla Keyes and Robert Merfeld, Wednesday, January 17, 2001

Boston University School for the Arts
Music Division

—presents—

FACULTY CONCERT

BAYLA KEYES, *violin*

ROBERT MERFELD, *piano*

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Wednesday, January 17, 2001 at 8:00 p.m.
The Tsai Performance Center
685 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts

Boston University School for the Arts
Music Division
—presents—

BAYLA KEYES, *violin*
ROBERT MERFELD, *piano*

Wednesday, January 17, 2001
8:00 p.m.

PROGRAM

Sonata in F major for Piano and Violin, Op. 24 "Spring" — Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
- Allegro
- Adagio molto espressivo
- Scherzo: Allegro molto
- Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo

Partita No. 2 in D minor for Unaccompanied Violin, BWV 1004 — Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
- Allemande
- Corrente
- Sarabande
- Gigue
- Ciaconna

—Intermission—

Sonata No. 3 in D minor for Violin and Piano, Op. 108 — Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
- Allegro
- Adagio
- Un poco presto e con sentimento
- Presto agitato

from *Porgy and Bess* (*trans.* Heifetz) — George Gershwin (1898-1937)
- Summertime/A woman Is a Sometime Thing
- Bess, You Is My Woman Now
- It Ain't Necessarily So

PROGRAM NOTES

Ludwig van Beethoven
Sonata in F Major for Piano and Violin, Op. 24

Beethoven, the giant who strode between classicism and romanticism, wrote ten sonatas for the combination of piano and violin, of which Op. 24 has proved to be one of the most popular. Composed in 1800 and published in 1801, the sonata was dedicated to Count Moritz von Fries, a Viennese banker and patron of the arts. Beethoven came to Vienna in 1792 from Bonn, Germany, in order to study with Franz Joseph Haydn. He had met with some critical disapproval for his compositions (one critic remarked of Op. 12, "What a bizarre and tiresome way it is!") and Lewis Lockwood speculates that with Op. 24 Beethoven may have been consciously seeking to create an object of unusual beauty.

This sonata, written in the year following the publication of the three sonatas in Op. 12, is the first of the violin sonatas to have a four-movement plan. A four-note turning theme is featured and transformed in each movement, giving this work a pleasing unity and symmetry. The first movement, *Allegro*, is in classical sonata form with a fluidity and ease of manner which has perhaps given rise to the nickname "Spring." However, this grace is deceptive. Beethoven uses this serene material to introduce revolutionary compositional changes, making a complete presentation of the theme, first in the violin and then in the piano. This new equality between instruments foreshadows the partnerships of two later sonatas, Op. 30 No. 2, the great C minor, and Op. 47, the Kreutzer. In the second movement, *Adagio molto espressivo*, the typical song form A-B-A is transmuted by a departure into strange and exalted keys, anticipating the great slow movements of the late string quartets. The remarkably short and humorous *Scherzo* is quickly followed by a relaxed and good-natured *Rondo*, with bits of virtuosic display. It is interesting to note that the last movement was originally sketched for piano alone and may have predated the rest of the sonata.

In Op. 24 the integration of violin and piano, normally dissimilar instruments, is skillful and secure. The individual parts are satisfying for the performers and this may account for the sonata's frequent presence on the concert stage. Beethoven's unusual stress on melodic beauty, particularly in the opening themes of each movement, may indicate the composer's participation in the eighteenth-century philosophical discussion of what constitutes beauty. Certainly, if the purpose of art is to create a sense of compositional harmony and simplicity, this work is a beloved success. The same composer who writes of "seizing Fate by the Throat" has here found in himself an oasis of calm and gentleness.

–With thanks to Lewis Lockwood, for his lecture, "All Things Beautiful in Music," at the International Beethoven Festival—Conference, Boston University, October 5, 2000.

Johann Sebastian Bach
Partita No. 2 in D minor for Unaccompanied Violin, BWV 1004

Johann Sebastian Bach's contribution to Western classical music can hardly be overestimated. Modest, gifted beyond measure, and dedicated to his craft and his God, he used his knowledge of the Italian and German musical styles of his time to create an architecture of his own. His compositions represent the pinnacle of the Baroque era and the foundation for composers who followed him. In polyphony, harmony, and sheer inventiveness, Bach has no equal.

The three solo violin sonatas and three solo violin partitas have been considered the cornerstone of the violin repertoire. Bach was trained as a violinist by his father before he began studying organ with his brother, which brought him fame as a virtuoso throughout his native Germany. He wrote the six works while in Cöthen (the autograph copy in Bach's own hand is dated 1720.) He probably performed them himself, while serving as capellmeister, with a small orchestra of virtuosos employed by Prince Leopold. Although the works were used for many years principally as a means to master the technical demands of the violin, in 1843, the violinist Ferdinand David edited a version for practical performance. Gradually, individual movements entered the mainstream of the violin recital repertoire, and today it is customary to program entire works. An exception to this rule is the great *Chaconne* (*Ciaconna*) from the D minor Partita, which is often performed alone and which has been transcribed for many other instruments.

The D minor Partita, like the other two partitas, uses the same key for all movements, and bases them on dance forms. It begins with the traditional sequence of *Allemande*, *Courante*, *Sarabande*, and *Gigue*, and culminates with the monumental *Chaconne*, also a dance, with a slow triple meter and slightly varying ground bass. In the words of Christoph Wolfe, "Bach, the quintessential instrumentalist, raises and redefines the technical standards of performing by fully exploiting the idiomatic qualities of the violin. [These] compositions demonstrate... his ability to bring into play, without even an accompanying bass part, dense counterpoint and refined harmony with distinctive and well-articulated rhythmic designs." In the *Chaconne*, Bach extensively varies an 8-bar phrase, building into an overall arch form (D minor-D major-D minor) 256 bars. Techniques of multiple stops, arpeggiation, and canonic imitation abound. Analysis can catalog the difficulties, both technical and compositional, of a work of such magnitude; but intellect alone cannot

explain the exaltation of spirit for those fortunate to study this greatest of all Chaconnes.

Johannes Brahms
Sonata No. 3 in D minor for Violin and Piano, Op. 108

In the words of Donald Jay Grout, "Brahms is the giant among composers of chamber music in the nineteenth century, the true successor of Beethoven in this field as in that of the symphony." His sonatas for piano and one other instrument, including works for violin, violoncello, and clarinet/viola, are treasured by players and audiences alike as among the highest examples of their genres. The three violin sonatas are evidence of Brahms' long association with the great German violinist of his day, Joseph Joachim. The lyric character of the first two sonatas and their three-movement forms stand in sharp contrast to the brooding, serious, and powerful third sonata, a favorite of generations of performers.

In the D minor Sonata, as is characteristic of Brahms in all his sonatas, the two instruments are full partners. The writing is concentrated, contrapuntal, and idiomatic. The work has four movements, making it almost symphonic in scope, and each movement has a distinct character of its own. The *Allegro*, in classic sonata form, is notable for the elusive quality of its opening motif, marked *sotto voce ma espressivo*, and for its development, which is on a dominant pedal throughout, yet nevertheless proceeds through a series of ineffable harmonic modulations. The *Adagio* opens with a long and beautiful cantilena for the violin G string. The *Scherzo*, marked *Un poco presto e con sentimento*, is a magical intermezzo; Clara Schumann, who with her husband Robert was a close friend and loving critic of Brahms, wrote, "I loved very much indeed the third movement which is like a beautiful girl sweetly frolicking with her lover—then suddenly in the middle of it all, a flash of deep passion, only to make way for sweet dalliance once more." The *Finale, Presto agitato*, is a dramatic sonata-rondo which brings this masterpiece to an arresting and tragic culmination.

George Gershwin
(*trans.* by Jascha Heifetz)
Songs from *Porgy and Bess*

Born in 1898 to immigrant parents living in Brooklyn, New York, George Gershwin (Jacob Gershowitz) parlayed a childhood gift for playing by ear into a career as pianist, popular songwriter, and finally major figure in American music. His classical training with the American composers Rubin Goldmark and Henry Cowell, as well as Russian theorist Joseph Schillinger, combined with his early experience as a songwriter hawking his wares on New York City's famed "Tin Pan Alley" to give

him a natural sense of melody and a great harmonic inventiveness. His major works include *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924), *An American in Paris* (1928), and his full-length opera, *Porgy and Bess* (1935), the first and best-known American opera.

Based on a dramatization of a novel written by Edwin Dubose Heyward in 1925, *Porgy and Bess* is the story of a crippled man who tries to save a wayward woman with his love. Set on the waterfront in Charleston, South Carolina, the poignant three-hour opera, depicting black courage and tenderness in the face of overwhelming poverty and despair, is filled with jazz and folk idioms absorbed by Gershwin, who had himself spent much time in Charleston, listening to black people sing spirituals and street songs. *Porgy and Bess* includes some of Gershwin's most famous songs, which entered the mainstream of American popular music almost immediately, despite the initial failure of the first production at the Alvin Theatre in New York. A subsequent attempt to produce the opera at the Metropolitan Opera House failed, due to the auspices' refusal to honor Gershwin's insistence on the use of black performers in the main roles. Finally in 1952, the United States State Department sponsored a hugely successful international tour of the opera, featuring an all-black cast. Songs such as *Summertime, It Ain't Necessarily So,* and *Bess, You Is My Woman Now* have joined the lasting Gershwin legacy, blending the popular and the serious, and heavily influencing later generations of European and American composers.

Jascha Heifetz, arguably the greatest violinist of the twentieth century, transcribed five of these songs for violin and piano in 1944. At this time, the age of transcriptions as a staple of violin recitals was already beginning to pass, but as Heifetz himself remarked, "Vignettes are important, and I never believed that only one thing should be done at the cost of another." The three lovely violin songs included here combine beloved Gershwin tunes with graceful violin embellishments that are enjoyable for player and listener alike.

—Bayla Keyes

MEET THE ARTISTS

Violinist **Bayla Keyes** is an active soloist and chamber musician, performing as a member of Boston Musica Viva, the Cambridge Chamber Players, Triple Helix, Sonos, and the Tempest Trio. Recent concert highlights include the Bargemusic series in New York City; solo appearances with the Richmond, Concord, and Ohio Chamber Symphonies; a cycle of the complete Beethoven violin sonatas in Boston, premieres of concertos by Bernard Hoffer and Richard Festinger;

annual recitals presenting American works at Boston University; and recording Michael Daugherty's *Lex*, a dazzling showcase for electronic violin. She is well-known to audiences as a founding member of the Muir String Quartet, with whom she won the Evian and Naumburg Competitions and played over one thousand concerts on the international touring circuit. Ms. Keyes received her Bachelor's degree from the Curtis Institute of Music, her Master's degree from Yale University, and her first professional experience with the acclaimed Music from Marlboro. Her teachers have included Ivan Galamian, Felix Galimir, Raphael Hillyer, Paul Kling, Oscar Shumsky, Karen Tuttle, and members of the Beaux Arts Trio, Budapest, and Guarneri Quartets.

Ms. Keyes teaches at Boston University, where she is co-chairman of the String Department, and at several summer festivals, most notably the Boston University Tanglewood Institute and the Interlochen Chamber Music Conference. She plays a Gennarius Gagliano violin made in 1740. Ms. Keyes has recorded for Video Artists International, Ecoclassics, CRI, Musical Heritage, EMI-France, and New World Records.

Born in New York City, **Robert Merfeld** began his piano studies at an early age with Leonid Hambro. He graduated from the Oberlin Conservatory as a student of Emil Danenberg and received a Master's degree from the Juilliard School as a scholarship student of Beveridge Webster. While at Juilliard, he pursued art song accompaniment with Viennese tenor Hans Heinz and also worked in the studios of Jennie Tourel, Oscar Shumsky, and Leonard Rose.

Mr. Merfeld was a founding member of the Apple Hill Chamber Players with whom he toured nationally and internationally for over twenty years. He participates regularly in collaborative recitals throughout the United States with artists such as violinists Stanley Ritchie and Arnold Steinhardt, and vocalists Dawn Upshaw and Lucy Shelton. He has performed at Aspen, Ravinia, Caramoor, Marlboro, and New England Bach festivals. Mr. Merfeld has performed concertos with many orchestras including the national orchestras of Costa Rica and Bolivia, the Dartmouth Symphony Orchestra, and the Brandeis University Orchestra.

Mr. Merfeld has recorded on the Sine Qua Non and Centaur labels, has appeared on National Public Television, and has been a frequent performer on WGBH-Boston and WXQR-New York radio stations. He is currently on the piano and chamber music faculty of Boston University Boston University's Tanglewood Institute.

UPCOMING EVENTS

January 26
8:00 p.m.

Faculty Concert
Triple Helix Piano Trio
Bayla Keyes, *violin*
Rhonda Rider, *guest artist, cello*
Lois Shapiro, *guest artist, piano*
Marion Dry, *guest artist, contralto*
The Tsai Performance Center
685 Commonwealth Avenue

January 31
8:00 p.m.

Faculty Concert
Franz Schubert Birthday Concert
Robert Merfeld, *piano*
Bayla Keyes, *violin*
Michael Reynolds, *cello*
Horia Mihail, *piano*
Eric Ruske, *horn*
William Hite, *tenor*
The Tsai Performance Center
685 Commonwealth Avenue

February 5
8:00 p.m.

Boston University Symphony Orchestra
Celebrating Roman Totenberg's 90th Birthday
David Hoose, *conductor*
Roman Totenberg, *violin*
The Tsai Performance Center
685 Commonwealth Avenue

February 6
8:00 p.m.

Faculty Concert
Michael Zaretsky, *viola*
Horia Mihail, *piano*
The Tsai Performance Center
685 Commonwealth Avenue

February 7
8:00 p.m.

ALEA III
Theodore Antoniou , *music director*
The Tsai Performance Center
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