

Ana-Maria Vera, piano

THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 11 AM
TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

NOTES BY KEN MELTZER

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)

Piano Sonata No. 12 in F Major, K. 332 (1783)

- I. Allegro
- II. Adagio
- III. Allegro assai

MAURICE RAVEL (1875–1937)

Sonatine (1903–5)

- I. Modéré
- II. Mouvement de menuet
- III. Animé

ISAAC ALBÉNIZ (1860–1909)

Suite española No. 1, Opus 47 (1886–1891)

- III. Sevilla (Sevillanas); Allegro moderato
- V. Asturias (Leyenda); Allegro ma non troppo
- VII. Castilla (Seguidillas); Allegro molto

ENRIQUE GRANADOS (1867–1916)

Quejas, o La maja y el ruiseñor from Goyescas (1909–11)

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862–1918)

L'isle joyeuse (1904)

Piano Sonata No. 12 in F Major, K. 332 (1783)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in Salzburg, Austria, on January 27, 1756, and died in Vienna, Austria, on December 5, 1791.

🕒 Approx. performance time: 18 mins.

📅 SMF performance history: 4/04/11

In July of 1783, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and his wife, Constanze, traveled from their home in Vienna to Salzburg. For a number of reasons, it was a significant journey. The visit marked the first time in more than two years that Mozart had returned to his native city. In the spring of 1781, Mozart asserted his independence by abruptly resigning from the service of the Court of the Salzburg Archbishop, Hieronymus Colloredo. Mozart took this bold step despite the pleas of the Archbishop's representatives and the composer's father, Leopold, himself a

prominent Salzburg musician. The situation was so acrimonious that Mozart delayed in returning to Salzburg, in part because he feared he might risk arrest by the Archbishop.

Mozart's disobedience of his father's wishes placed considerable strain on their relationship. Matters worsened when, on August 4, 1782, Wolfgang wed Constanze Weber. Leopold did not approve of the union, viewing the marriage as a rash and irresponsible move on his son's part. Even after the wedding, Leopold continued to express his disapproval. After the birth of his first child in June of 1783, Mozart (perhaps as an act of defiance) chose to name the baby not after Leopold, but after the child's godfather. And so, by the time of Wolfgang and Constanze arrived in Salzburg toward the end of July, family wounds were in desperate need of healing.

Wolfgang and Constanze remained in Salzburg for what proved to be a rather unhappy three months. The couple received a decidedly cold reception from Mozart's father and sister. On August 19, Wolfgang and Constanze's infant son, Raimund, died while under a nurse's care in Vienna. Mozart, the proud father, now could only lament, "We are both very sad about our poor, bonny, fat, darling little boy."

Modern scholarship places the four Piano Sonatas, K. 330–333, during this challenging period in Mozart's life. Mozart probably composed the Sonata in F Major, K. 332, during his stay in Salzburg. In all likelihood, Mozart composed these works both for teaching and his own performance.

I. *Allegro*—The first movement, in 3/4 time, opens with a genial, flowing melody, juxtaposed with a sprightly response. A vigorous minor-key passage leads to the delicate second principal theme. Another minor-key episode serves as a bridge to the third, chorale-like theme, followed by the exposition's vigorous close. A brief development section precedes the recapitulation of the principal themes, and the opening movement's emphatic final bars.

II. *Adagio*—The Sonata's slow-tempo movement, in B-flat Major, begins with the yearning central melody, sung over *legato* accompaniment in the left hand. A hushed lyricism pervades throughout the *Adagio*, right to the delicate final bars.

III. *Allegro assai*—A breathless cascade launches the finale, in 6/8 time. Typical of Mozart, this sonata-form movement boasts an abundance of thematic material, as well as irrepressible energy. The expected development and recapitulation of

the principal themes lead to a rather unexpected dénouement, with the music gradually fading to a *pianissimo* close.

Sonatine (1903–5)

Maurice Ravel was born in Ciboure, Basses-Pyrénées, France, on March 7, 1875, and died in Paris, France, on December 28, 1937.

🕒 Approx. performance time: 12 mins.

📅 SMF performance history: SMF premiere

Ravel's *Sonatine* for piano originated as a contest entry. A Paris publication, the *Weekly Critical Review*, sponsored a competition challenging composers to write the brief opening movement of a sonatina for solo piano. Ravel's friend, the critic M.D. Calvocoressi, wrote for the *Weekly Critical Review*. He encouraged Ravel to enter the contest. Ravel complied, but the contest was ultimately canceled, due to the publication's impending bankruptcy.

Two years later, Ravel added the second and third movements to create a three-movement *Sonatine*. Ravel dedicated the work to his friends Ida and Cipa Godebski. A few years later, Ravel dedicated his *Ma mère l'oye* (*Mother Goose*) (1908), originally for piano duet, to the Godebskis' children, Mimi and Jean. The first performance of the Ravel *Sonatine* took place in Lyon, France, on March 10, 1906, performed by Madame Paule de Lestang. The Paris premiere took place a few weeks later. Ravel frequently played the first two movements of the *Sonatine* in concert, and made a reproducing piano roll of that same music. However, Ravel did not perform the virtuoso finale in public.

Ravel frequently turned to artistic expression of the past, be it musical, visual, or written, as the inspiration for his own compositions. The *Sonatine* is the early 20th-century French composer's take on the piano sonatas of such Classical-era composers as Mozart, Haydn, and Clementi. The Ravel *Sonatine* has long been a favorite of concert pianists and their audiences.

I. *Modéré*—The first movement, in F-sharp minor, opens with the flowing, initial principal melody, marked *doux et expressif*. The melody begins with the interval of a perfect fourth (here, F-sharp to C-sharp) that serves as the nucleus for the entire *Sonatine*. This and subsequent thematic material undergo the traditional development and restatement of the sonata-form movement. The opening movement, notable throughout for its elegance and restraint, finally resolves to a whisper.

II. *Mouvement de menuet*—The second movement is a *Minuet*, an elegant court dance in triple meter. Ravel's *Minuet* is set in 3/8, and in the key of D-flat Major.

III. *Animé*—The finale, in F-sharp minor, is in the spirit of a *toccata*, a brilliant keyboard work designed to showcase the dexterity of the soloist. Occasionally, the breathless pace of the finale is spelled by a more placid melody (*Même Mouvement Tranquille*). But for the most part, the whirlwind momentum predominates, capped by the stirring final bars.

Excerpts from *Suite española* No. 1, Opus 47 (1886–1891)

Isaac Albéniz was born in Camprodon, Girona, Catalonia, Spain, on May 29, 1860, and died in Cambô-les-Bains, France, on May 18, 1909.

🕒 Approx. performance time: 12 mins.

📅 SMF performance history: 3/26/09 (*Sevilla*); 4/12/19 (*Asturias*); SMF premiere (*Castilla*)

The Spanish composer and pianist Isaac Albéniz began his musical life at a remarkably early age, making his first concert appearance in Barcelona at the age of 4. Despite a turbulent childhood, Albéniz was able to make a successful transition from prodigy to a mature musician who made remarkable contributions to the cause of Spanish music, both in his native land and abroad.

Albéniz was a gifted and prolific composer, whose works include operas, songs, orchestral and chamber pieces. However, Albéniz is still best remembered for his numerous compositions for solo piano, many of which evoke the life and music of his native land. Among the most famous and beloved are the *Spanish Suites*, the *Suite española* No. 1, Opus 47, and No. 2, Opus 97.

Isaac Albéniz began work on the first *Suite española* in 1885. Albéniz composed the *Suite* pursuant to an arrangement with the Spanish publisher, Benito Zozaya. The plan was for Albéniz to compose a series of eight pieces, each relating to a specific Spanish town or region.

By 1886, Albéniz had completed four of the eight pieces—*Granada*, *Cataluña*, *Sevilla*, and *Cuba*—which were then published by Zozaya. Although Albéniz completed the other four movements (*Cádiz*, *Asturias*, *Aragón*, and *Castilla*) by 1891, almost ten years elapsed before their publication. The reasons for the delay are not entirely certain. But by 1901, Zozaya's firm was out of business, and the music was published by another concern.

The eight movements of Albéniz's first *Suite española* were published collectively as the Spanish composer's Opus 47. Albéniz composed a second *Suite*, Opus 97 (comprising two movements), in the late 1880s. In the original solo piano versions of the *Suites*, Albéniz conjures a remarkably wide range of colors and textures. Perhaps it is not surprising that Albéniz's magic inspired others to adapt these works for performance by various solo instruments and ensembles. The captivating folk rhythms and melodies of Albéniz's two Spanish *Suites* have long earned favor with a broad spectrum of audiences.

The titles of the eight movements of the First *Suite española* designate both a musical region and type of music. This concert features three excerpts from the *Suite*.

III. *Sevilla (Sevillanas)*; *Allegro moderato*—The *sevillanas* is a vibrant gypsy flamenco dance in triple meter. Two presentations of the *sevillanas* frame a central episode (*Meno mosso*) that has an improvisational character.

V. *Asturias (Leyenda)*; *Allegro ma non troppo*—The brilliant *Asturias*, subtitled *Leyenda (Legend)*, evokes the irrepressible spirit of the flamenco. An episode that Albéniz directs be played in a "singing manner; broadly, but sweetly" (*cantando largamente ma dolce*) offers contrast.

VII. *Castilla (Seguidillas)*; *Allegro molto*—*Castilla* spotlights the *seguidilla*, a vibrant Spanish dance in 3/4 time, here with an insistent, strumming accompaniment.

Quejas, o La maja y el ruiseñor from *Goyescas* (1909–11)

Enrique Granados was born in Lleida, Spain, on July 27, 1867, and died in the English Channel on March 24, 1916.

🕒 Approx. performance time: 6 mins.

📅 SMF performance history: SMF premiere

1896 marked the 150th anniversary of the birth of the great Spanish painter Francisco Goya (1746–1828). That year, Spanish pianist and composer Enrique Granados wrote to a friend:

I have fallen in love with Goya, with his palette. With him, with the Duchess of Alba; his mistresses, his models, his quarrels. That rose-white of the cheeks contrasting with the light and dark velvet trimmings; those supple waists, hands of mother-of-pearl, and jasmine resting on black marble—they intrigue me. I would like to combine the

sentimental, the amorous, the passionate, the dramatic, and the tragic, as Goya did.

The Granados tribute to Goya and his era materialized in a series of works for solo piano collectively titled *Goyescas*, and subtitled *Los majos enamorados* (The Majos in Love). Between 1909–11, Granados composed six pieces, divided into two parts. Part I comprises four pieces, with a pair of works in Part II. Granados premiered Part I at the Barcelona Palau de la Música Catalana on March 11, 1911. Granados gave the first performance of Part II in Paris, at the Salle Pleyel, on April 2, 1914.

In 1913, Granados created the opera *Goyescas*, featuring music from the solo piano works. Granados intended for the premiere of his opera to take place in Paris, but the onset of World War I made that impossible. Instead, the premiere took place at New York's Metropolitan Opera on January 28, 1916, the first opera ever performed in Spanish by that company. Granados attended the premiere. During the journey home, Granados and his wife were killed after their boat was torpedoed by a German submarine. The eminent British music critic Ernest Newman wrote: "The death of Granados was the greatest loss the artistic world of Europe has sustained by reason of the War."

Quejas, o La maja y el ruiseñor (Laments, or the Maja and the Nightingale) juxtaposes a young woman's plaintive song (*Andante melancólico*) with the bird's lovely response.

L'isle joyeuse (1904)

Claude Debussy was born in St. Germain-en-Laye, France, on August 22, 1862, and died in Paris, France, on March 25, 1918.

🕒 Approx. performance time: 7 mins.

📅 SMF performance history: 3/27/15

Claude Debussy compared his *L'isle joyeuse* (*The Joyous Island*) to Jean-Antoine Watteau's 1717 painting, *L'Embarquement pour Cythère* (*The Embarkation for Cythera*). When Debussy composed the work in 1904, he was residing on his own joyous island, the Isle of Jersey, with his beloved Emma Bardac. Debussy noted that the work "joins together force with grace," making it "difficult to play." *The Joyous Island* is one of Debussy's most exuberant and brilliant works for solo piano.