

Drew Petersen, piano

FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 3 PM
TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

NOTES BY KEN MELTZER

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

Partita No. 5 in G Major, BWV 829 (1730)

- I. *Praeambulum*
- II. *Allemande*
- III. *Courante*
- IV. *Sarabande*
- V. *Tempo di Minuetto*
- VI. *Passepied*
- VII. *Gigue*

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

Fantasie in C Major, D. 760, “Wanderer Fantasy” (1822)

- I. *Allegro con fuoco ma non troppo*
- II. *Adagio*
- III. *Presto*
- IV. *Allegro*

INTERMISSION

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810-1849)

Barcarolle in F-sharp Major, Opus 60 (1845-46)

ENRIQUE GRANADOS (1867-1916)

Valses poéticos (1887)

SAMUEL BARBER (1910-1981)

Piano Sonata, Opus 26 (1949)

- I. *Allegro energico*
- II. *Allegro vivace e leggiero*
- III. *Adagio mesto*
- IV. *Fuga. Allegro con spirito*

Partita No. 5 in G Major, BWV 829 (1730)

Johann Sebastian Bach was born in Eisenach, Germany, on March 21, 1685, and died in Leipzig, Germany, on July 28, 1750.

🕒 *Approx. performance time: 19 mins.*

📅 *SMF performance history: SMF premiere*

In 1723, Johann Sebastian Bach left the service of Prince Leopold in Cöthen to begin his tenure as Music Director of Leipzig's St. Thomas Church and School. In 1689, Bach's Leipzig predecessor, Johann Kuhnau, published a series of suites for solo keyboard he collectively titled *Neue Clavier-*

Übung (New Keyboard Practice). While the works were in traditional suite form (an introductory movement, followed by a series of dances), Kuhnau referred to each of them as *Partitas*.

Bach's *English* and *French* Suites for solo keyboard date from the composer's Cöthen years (1717-1723). After his arrival in Leipzig, Bach composed another series of six suites for solo keyboard. Five of the works were published between 1726-1730. In 1731, the entire set of six was published as Bach's Opus 1. Bach followed Kuhnau's precedent, calling the works *Partitas*, collected under the title of *Clavier-Übung*.

In certain respects, Bach adheres to tradition, fashioning works that include the expected introduction and series of dances. But each of the opening movements is given an individual title. Only the first movement of the *Partita* No. 1 is designated as a *Prelude* (*Praeludium*). Additionally, each of the *Partitas* includes one or more of what Bach refers to on the title-page as *andern Galanterien* (“other gallantries”). These departures from convention, coupled with Bach's compelling, elegant, and challenging writing for the keyboard, produce works that are a never-ending source of fascination and delight.

I. *Praeambulum*—Bach titles the prelude to the *Partita* No. 5 a *Praeambulum* (*Preamble*). Cast in triple meter, the music features elegant passagework, punctuated by more emphatic statements.

II. *Allemande*—An *Allemande* (the French word for “German”) is a dance in moderate tempo and duple or (as in this movement) quadruple meter. This *Allemande* makes delightful use both of triplets and dotted rhythms.

III. *Courante*—A *courante* (French, “running”) is a quick-tempo dance in triple meter.

IV. *Sarabande*—Bach uses this slow-tempo dance, also in triple meter, as the basis for noble, introspective music.

V. *Tempo di Minuetto*—A *Minuet* (*Minuetto*) is an elegant dance in 3/4 time. This *Minuet* is notable for its lively, wide-ranging character.

VI. *Passepied*—The *Passepied*, a French court dance, is a somewhat more vigorous cousin of the *Minuet*.

VII. *Gigue*—A popular Baroque dance in quick tempo and here, in a sprightly 6/8 meter, brings the *Partita* No. 5 to a spirited conclusion.

Fantasie in C Major, D. 760, “Wanderer Fantasy” (1822)

Franz Schubert was born in Vienna, Austria, on January 31, 1797, and died there on November 19, 1828.

🕒 *Approx. performance time: 22 mins.*

📅 *SMF performance history: 4/04/16*

In October and November of 1822, Franz Schubert worked on what, by tradition, should have been a symphony in four movements. During that time, Schubert composed and orchestrated the first two movements. Schubert also sketched the third-movement *Scherzo* in almost complete form, and orchestrated its first nine bars. At this point, for reasons that have never been determined, Schubert abandoned work on the symphony. No other music survives from one of Schubert's most beloved compositions, his Symphony in B minor, D. 759, nicknamed the “Unfinished.”

That same November, Schubert turned his attention to a Fantasy for solo piano in C Major. Schubert dedicated the work to Emmanuel, Edler von Liebenberg de Zsettin, a pupil of Johann Nepomuk Hummel. In sharp contrast to the brooding introspective lyricism of the “Unfinished” Symphony, the “Wanderer Fantasy” is a blazing, heroic, virtuoso piece. Schubert's brilliant and dramatic manipulation of the Fantasy's central motif also foreshadows the masterpieces of the final years of this gifted composer's tragically brief life.

The “Wanderer Fantasy” is in four movements, played without pause.

I. *Allegro con fuoco ma non troppo*—The first movement begins with the introduction of the vaulting, *fortissimo* principal theme, based upon the Fantasy's central dactylic (long—short—short) rhythm. That theme undergoes an extended, virtuoso treatment before briefly yielding to the lyrical second principal theme, again based upon the seminal rhythm. An extended development of the themes, by turns energetic and introspective, resolves to the hushed closing measures, featuring a repeated tolling of the central motif.

II. *Adagio*—The pianist intones the slow-tempo movement's solemn melody, taken from Schubert's 1816 song, *Der Wanderer* (*The Wanderer*), D. 489. The melody (once again featuring the dactylic motif) is Schubert's setting of a text by Georg Philipp Schmidt von Lübeck:

Die Sonne dünk mich hier so kalt,
Die Blüte welk, das Leben alt,
Und was sie reden, leerer Schall,
Ich bin ein Fremdling überall.

*Here, the sun seems to me so cold,
The blossom faded, life old,
And what they say is an empty sound,
I am a stranger everywhere.*

The *Adagio* proceeds as an extended fantasy on the *Wanderer* melody, building to a passionate outburst. In the final measures, the right hand, over the left hand's turbulent accompaniment, sings the melody for the last time.

III. *Presto*—In the Fantasy's third-movement scherzo, the dactylic motif becomes a galloping dotted rhythm. A lyrical trio episode leads to a reprise of the scherzo, capped by two *fortissimo* chords.

IV. *Allegro*—The finale opens with an extended grand contrapuntal episode. Virtuoso fireworks bring the “Wanderer Fantasy” to a triumphant C Major close.

Barcarolle in F-sharp Major, Opus 60 (1845-46)

Frédéric Chopin was born in Żelazowa Wola, Poland, on March 1, 1810, and died in Paris, France, on October 17, 1849.

🕒 *Approx. performance time: 9 mins.*

📅 *SMF performance history: 3/23/09, 3/19/07*

Chopin composed only one piece that carries the name of the lilting song associated with Venetian gondoliers. The *Barcarolle*, Opus 60, is one of Chopin's late compositions. He included the work in his final Paris concert, given on February 16, 1848. Although Chopin was already quite ill, he played magnificently. As the critic for the *Gazette Musicale* wrote: “It is easier to describe the reception he had, the transports he excited, than to describe the mysteries of playing that has no analogue on earth.” Twenty months later, Chopin was dead, at the age of 39.

The great French composer, Maurice Ravel, offered a description of Chopin's *Barcarolle* (*Allegretto*) that is almost as poetic as the music itself:

The supple and delicate theme in triplets is everywhere clothed in dazzling harmonies. The melodic line is suspended throughout. A recitative stands out for a moment, remains suspended, and falls back softly, led by magical chords. The intensity mounts. A

new theme, very Italian and of a magnificent lyricism, bursts out. Then all becomes calm. A fast, trembling figure arises from the low notes and floats on precious, tender harmonies. One thinks of a mysterious apotheosis.

Valses poéticos (1887)

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

🕒 *Approx. performance time: 11 mins.*

📅 *SMF performance history: 3/23/06*

In 1913, Spanish composer and pianist Enrique Granados created his opera *Goyescas*. Granados fashioned the opera from his series of solo piano pieces of the same name, inspired in turn by the works of the great Spanish painter, Francisco Goya (1746-1828). 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. It was the first opera ever performed in Spanish by that company. Granados attended the premiere. During the journey home, Granados and his wife were killed when 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.”

While in New York, Granados performed a piano recital on January 23, 1916 at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, sponsored by the Society of the Friends of Music. On that occasion, Granados was joined by the legendary Catalan cellist, Pablo Casals. As part of the recital, Granados performed one of his favorite compositions, the early *Valses poéticos*. A critic for the *New York Herald* characterized the *Valses poéticos* as “charmingly Spanish in rhythm.” But in truth, the *Valses poéticos* are as much a tribute to the music of Chopin's Paris and Strauss's Vienna as they are a reflection of Granados's homeland.

The *Valses poéticos* open with a sprightly introduction (*Introducción. Vivace molto*) in 2/4 time. A series of varied waltzes ensues. The final *Coda* (*Presto*) concludes with a reprise of the initial waltz.

Introducción. Vivace molto

I. *Melodico*

II. *Tempo de Vals noble*

III. *Tempo de Vals lento*

IV. *Allegro humoristico*

V. *Allegretto (elegante)*

VI. *Quasi ad libitum (sentimental)*

VII. *Vivo*

Coda. Presto

Piano Sonata, Opus 26 (1949)

Samuel Barber was born in West Chester, Pennsylvania, on March 9, 1910, and died in New York on January 23, 1981.

🕒 *Approx. performance time: 20 mins.*

📅 *SMF performance history: SMF premiere*

In 1947, American composers Irving Berlin and Richard Rogers commissioned their younger compatriot and colleague, Samuel Barber, to compose a piano sonata, as part of the celebrations accompanying the 25th anniversary of the League of Composers. Although Berlin and Rogers did not specify a pianist to premiere the work, it soon became clear the honor would be accorded to the great Russian-born virtuoso Vladimir Horowitz (1904-1989). Horowitz, who had performed Barber's *Excursions* for solo piano in 1945, praised the American composer's keyboard music:

Barber is one of the few American composers who knows how to write for the piano. Copland has some good things, but they are not pianistic. I like pianistic music. Somehow, American composers don't understand the piano too well. Either they write music that is very pianistic, but has no substance, or write music that has substance, but isn't pianistic.

Barber worked on the score of the Piano Sonata between the autumn of 1947 and June of 1949. Barber acknowledged Horowitz's keyboard prowess heavily influenced his composition of the work:

Of course he had a great influence on me for writing for piano. Good God! He taught me so much about piano. He used to play Scriabin for me all night in Mount Kisco... My piano teacher, Vengerova, was a great teacher, but hearing Horowitz play was for me a great experience. I learned so much.

Barber originally conceived the Sonata as a three-movement work, concluding in slow tempo. But Horowitz encouraged Barber to add another movement to serve as the finale: “I saw three movements and told him the sonata would sound better if he made a very flashy last movement, but with content. So he did that fugue, which is the best thing in the sonata.”

Horowitz first performed the Barber Piano Sonata in public as part of a recital in Havana, Cuba, on December 9, 1949. A private performance at the G. Schirmer Building in New York on January 4, 1950, attracted an audience that included Aaron Copland, Lukas Foss, Gian Carlo Menotti, Douglas Moore, Thomas Schippers, William Schuman, and Virgil Thomson. Horowitz gave another public performance at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C., on January 11, 1950. The New York public premiere, at Carnegie Hall, took place on January 23. During the remainder of the year, Horowitz frequently included the Barber Sonata in his recital programs, and recorded the work for RCA on May 15, 1950.

Thanks in great part to Horowitz's advocacy, the Barber Piano Sonata enjoyed a tremendous success with the critics and public. Among its early admirers was French composer Francis Poulenc. After hearing Horowitz perform the Sonata on February 5, 1950, he wrote:

It pleases me without reserve. It is a remarkable work from both the musical and instrumental point of view. In turn, tragical, joyous, and songful, it ends up with a fantastically difficult to play fugue... Bursting with energy, this finale knocks you out ('Vous-met knock-out') in (something less than) five minutes.

I. *Allegro energico*—The first movement opens with a *forte* statement of the bold initial principal theme, based upon dotted rhythms. That music also serves as the foundation of the more lyrical second principal theme. Both themes undergo the expected sonata form development and recapitulation. The final coda begins in hushed fashion, but inexorably builds to a *fortissimo* conclusion.

II. *Allegro vivace e leggiero*—The second movement, the briefest of the four, serves as the Sonata's scherzo. Gossamer textures, sprightly, unflagging energy, and shifting meters create a playful, mischievous, atmosphere.

III. *Adagio mesto*—While at work on the Piano Sonata, Barber reported to his uncle, Sidney Homer: "I bought the 46 volumes of the Bach Gesellschaft and found them here on my return from Europe—a great temptation to peruse for hours and hours." Perhaps the spirit of Bach may be found in the slow-tempo third movement.

The *Adagio mesto* adopts the Baroque passacaglia form, in which the music journeys and develops over a repeated bass figure. The movement is constructed as an arch, as the whispered opening builds to an anguished climax, finally resolving to music that fades (*morendo*) to silence.

IV. *Fuga. Allegro con spirito*—The concluding *Fugue* is based upon a syncopated theme with a decidedly jazzy tinge. The finale is a brilliant virtuoso tour de force, culminating in the blazing final bars.