Robert McDuffie, violin & Robert Spano, piano

THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 5 PM
TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

NOTES BY KEN MELTZER

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)
Violin Sonata No. 1 in G Major, Opus 78 (1879)
I. Vivace ma non troppo
II. Adagio
III. Allegro molto moderato

JOHN CORIGLIANO (b. 1938)
Sonata for Violin and Piano (1963)
I. Allegro
II. Andantino (with simplicity)
III. Lento (quasi recitativo)
IV. Allegro

INTERMISSION

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)
Violin Sonata No. 7 in C minor, Opus 30, No. 2 (1802)
I. Allegro con brio
II. Adagio cantabile
III. Scherzo. Allegro
IV. Finale. Allegro

Violin Sonata No. 1 in G Major, Opus 78 (1879)

Johannes Brahms was born in Hamburg, Germany, on May 7, 1833, and died in Vienna, Austria, on April 3, 1897.
Approx. performance time: 28 mins.
SMF performance history: 3/25/12

Johannes Brahms spent the summers of 1877-79 in Pörtschach, a tiny Austrian village on Lake Wörth. As Brahms informed the German music critic, Eduard Hanslick: "The Wörthersee is untrodden ground, with melodies flying so fast that you need to watch that you don't step on any of them." Indeed, Brahms found Pörtschach a congenial locale for musical inspiration. There, Brahms composed his Second Symphony, Opus 73 (1877), the Violin Concerto, Opus 77 (1878), and the Two Piano Rhapsodies, Opus 79 (1879).

The first of the three Brahms Violin Sonatas, in G Major, Opus 78 (1879), was yet another product of those happy Pörtschach summers. Brahms shared the work with two of his dearest friends—Joseph Joachim and Clara Schumann. Brahms maintained a lifelong affection for Clara, the widow of Robert Schumann. And when Clara received the score of the G Major Violin Sonata in July of 1879, she immediately recognized the personal nature of Brahms's musical expression: "Your Sonata arrived today and of course I played it at once and could not help bursting into tears of joy over it."

I. *Vivace ma non troppo*—After a brief introduction by the piano, the violin sings the first principal theme, whose dotted rhythms form the nucleus for the entire Sonata. The arching second theme (*con anima*), also introduced by the violin, incorporates the dotted rhythm. The central development injects some storm and stress into a generally lyrical movement. The mood calms, and a descending passage by the violin dovetails into the start of the recapitulation (*Tempo I*). The peaceful mood of the coda yields to the *forte* closing bars.

II. *Adagio*—The slow-tempo movement opens with the piano's introduction of the broad principal melody, again incorporating the seminal dotted rhythm. The key shifts from E-flat Major to B minor for a stark episode, very much in the character of a funeral march, and once again featuring the dotted rhythm. A varied reprise of the opening E-flat Major section brings the *Adagio* to a serene resolution.

III. *Allegro molto moderato*—The violin offers a *dolce* presentation of the rondo finale's central melody. This melody, once again incorporating the central dotted rhythm, is a quotation of Brahms's *Regenlied* (*Rain Song*) (1873), Opus 59, No. 3 (as well as its Opus 59 companion, *Nachklang*). As a result, the G Major is often called the "Rain" Sonata. This haunting melody returns throughout the finale. Echoes of the first two movements also appear, providing a satisfying sense of unity and resolution, capped by the lovely closing bars.

Sonata for Violin and Piano (1963)

John Corigliano was born in New York on February 16, 1938.
Approx. performance time: 23 mins.
SMF performance history: SMF premiere

The first performance of John Corigliano's Sonata for Violin and Piano took place on July 10, 1964, at the Festival of Two Worlds, in Spoleto, Italy. The performers were violinist Yoko Matsuda and pianist Charles Wadsworth. The Sonata won the Spoleto Festival's Competition for Chamber Music.

> The Sonata for Violin and Piano, written during 1962-63, is for the most part a tonal work, although it incorporates non-tonal and poly-tonal sections within it as well as other 20th century harmonic, rhythmic and constructional techniques. The listener will recognize the work as a product of an American writer, although this is more the result of an American writing music than writing 'American' music — a second-nature, unconscious action on my part.
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> Rhythmically, the work is extremely varied. Meters change in almost every measure, and independent rhythmic patterns in each instrument are common. The Violin Sonata was originally entitled Duo, and therefore obviously treats both instruments as co-partners. Virtuosity is of great importance in adding color and energy to the work which is basically an optimistic statement, but the virtuosity is always motivated by musical means.
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> To cite an example: the last movement rondo includes in it a virtuosic polyrhythmic and polytonal perpetual motion whose thematic material and accompaniment figures are composed of three distinct elements derived from materials stated in the beginning of the movement. The 16th-note perpetual motion theme is originally a counterpoint

to the movement's initial theme. Against this are set two figures—an augmentation of the movement's primary theme and, in combination with that, a 5/8 rhythmic ostinato utilized originally to accompany a totally different earlier passage. All three elements combine to form a new virtuoso perpetual motion theme which is, of course, subjected to further development and elaboration.

— John Corigliano

Violin Sonata No. 7 in C minor, Opus 30, No. 2 (1802)

Ludwig van Beethoven was baptized in Bonn, Germany, on December 17, 1770, and died in Vienna, Austria, on March 26, 1827.
Approx. performance time: 25 mins.
SMF performance history: 3/26/11

In the first years of the 19th century, during what then appeared to be the height of his career, Beethoven started to experience difficulties with his hearing. In April of 1802, on the advice of his doctor, Beethoven relocated to the beautiful country village of Heiligenstadt, where he remained until the early fall. During his stay in Heiligenstadt, it appears Beethoven experienced a further decline in his hearing. Beethoven was forced to confront the possibility, even the likelihood, that he would become totally deaf. It was, of course, the cruelest joke fate could play upon Beethoven. He would soon become a virtuoso pianist unable to perform in public, and a composer unable to hear his own music.

It is not surprising that Beethoven spent much time contemplating the meaning of his life. One of the products of this soul-searching process was the document known as the "Heiligenstadt Testament," written in October of 1802. Addressed to his two brothers, the Testament was found among Beethoven's papers after the composer's death in 1827.

In the "Heiligenstadt Testament," Beethoven confessed:

> I was on the point of putting an end to my life—The only thing that held me back was *my art*. For indeed it seemed to me impossible to leave this world before I had produced all the works I felt the urge to compose; and thus I have dragged on this miserable existence—a truly miserable existence...

In the decade following the "Heiligenstadt Testament," Beethoven responded with ferocious, unflagging energy and determination. During this extraordinary period, Beethoven composed such masterpieces as the Symphonies Nos. 3-8, the Fourth and Fifth ("Emperor") Piano Concertos, the "Razumovsky" String Quartets, the "Waldstein," "Appassionata" and "Les Adieux" Piano Sonatas, and the composer's only opera, *Fidelio*.

That fateful year of 1802 was remarkably productive as well. Compositions include the Symphony No. 2, Opus 36, the variations for solo piano, Opus 34 and 35 ("Eroica"), and the Piano Sonatas, Opus 31, Nos. 1–3. In 1802, Beethoven also composed three Sonatas for Violin and Piano, Opus 30, Nos. 1–3. Beethoven dedicated the Violin Sonatas to Tsar Alexander I of Russia. Beethoven, a great advocate of democracy, admired the Tsar's enlightened policies. In 1814, during the Congress of Vienna, Beethoven met the Empress of Russia. When she learned that the Tsar had never acknowledged Beethoven's dedication of the Violin Sonatas, she gave the composer a gift of 100 ducats.

I. *Allegro con brio*—The piano offers a furtive presentation of the opening movement's first principal theme. The violin follows suit, and the tension mounts to a stormy, *fortissimo* outburst. The mood quickly changes, as the violin introduces a sprightly march, played over the piano's *staccato* accompaniment. The exposition closes with the violin's melancholy, flowing melody. Repetitions of the opening portion of the first principal theme serve to launch the development. The music builds to the *fortissimo* start of a varied recapitulation. Once again, the nucleus of the first principal theme opens the final coda section that brings the movement to a furious close.

II. *Adagio cantabile*—The piano immediately presents the hymn-like central theme of the Sonata's slow-tempo movement. The melody serves as the basis for a series of rapt and lyrical episodes. Toward the close, the repose of the *Adagio* is shattered by a series of *fortissimo* ascending scales. Calm returns in the final measures, with the violin's alternation of pizzicato and bowed notes providing a lovely coloristic effect.

III. *Scherzo. Allegro*—The *Scherzo* movement, in C Major and in 3/4 time, opens with the piano's introduction of the jaunty principal theme. The central *Trio* offers a more flowing melody, but one that still maintains the amiable mood of the opening section. A reprise of the *Scherzo* concludes the third movement.

IV. *Finale. Allegro*—Rumblings in the piano's lower register serve to launch the *Finale*'s recurring principal theme, closing with furtive *staccato* descending steps. Although the *Finale* is set in the key of C minor, portions radiate warmth and even a sense of playfulness. A virtuoso *Presto* coda brings the Sonata to a brilliant conclusion.