

# Sebastian Knauer, piano

MONDAY, APRIL 6, 11 AM  
TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

NOTES BY KEN MELTZER

## FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN (1732–1809)

### Piano Sonata No. 33 in C minor, Hob. XVI:20 (1771)

- I. Moderato
- II. Andante con moto
- III. Finale. Allegro

## WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)

### Piano Sonata No. 14 in C minor, K. 457 (1784)

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

### 12 Variations on “Ah, vous dirai-je maman,” K. 265/300e (ca. 1781–2)

## EDVARD GRIEG (1843–1907)

### Holberg Suite, Opus 40 (1884) IV. Air

## FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809–1847)

### Variations sérieuses, Opus 54 (1841)

player. He had his own opera, spoken theatre, marionette theatre, church music, and chamber music. Haydn had his hands full: he composed, he had to conduct all the music, help with the rehearsals, give lessons and even tune his own keyboard instrument in the orchestra. He often wondered how it had been possible for him to compose as much music as he did when he was forced to lose so many hours in purely mechanical tasks.

Haydn composed his Piano Sonata in C minor (his only such work in that key) in 1771. The Sonata was not published until 1880, part of a set of six that Haydn dedicated to the Auenbrugger sisters, fine amateur pianists. These Sonatas were the first of Haydn's works to be published by the Vienna firm of Artaria & Co. Artaria would go on to publish many of Haydn's compositions.

The late 1760s and 1770s were among the most prolific and creative of Haydn's Esterházy tenure. These years coincide with the *Sturm und Drang* (“Storm and Stress”) literary movement that was sweeping throughout Germany. During that period, Haydn composed several works in the spirit of the *Sturm und Drang* movement, featuring minor keys, pervasive and restless energy, startling dynamic contrasts and frequent, dramatic pauses. The Sonata in C minor is a sterling example of Haydn's *Sturm und Drang* music.

I. *Moderato*—The Sonata opens with the first principal theme, laden with pathos. Two major-key themes follow; the first elegant, the second, more playful. The development begins in understated fashion, but soon acquires considerable energy. The concluding recapitulation presents all of the principal themes in the minor key.

II. *Andante con moto*—The Sonata's slow-tempo movement, in triple meter and in the key of A-flat Major, opens with a flowing, embellished melody. The *Andante* is notable throughout for its introspective lyricism, and use of right versus left hand effects.

III. *Finale. Allegro*—The *Finale (Allegro)* returns to the home key of C minor. The terse descending principal theme serves as the basis for numerous virtuoso passages, bringing the Sonata to a dramatic conclusion.

## Piano Sonata No. 14 in C minor, K. 457 (1784)

🕒 *Approx. performance time: 18 mins.*

📅 *SMF performance history: 4/02/18, 4/02/12*

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

Although Mozart's life was brief, he had an extended and celebrated career, both as composer and pianist. By the age of 5, Mozart was writing music, and by the age of 6, he was concertizing throughout Europe.

Mozart's contemporaries were virtually unanimous in their praise of his brilliance as a keyboard artist. Muzio Clementi (1752–1832), one of the greatest pianists of his time, saw Mozart perform: “Until then, I had never heard anyone play with so much spirit and grace.” Tenor Michael Kelly wrote: “His feeling, the rapidity of his fingers, the great execution and strength of his left hand particularly, and the apparent inspiration of his modulations astounded me.” In addition to his pristine technique and musicality, a key element of Mozart's keyboard artistry was his flawless legato—the immaculate binding of one note to the next. Mozart's favorite phrase to describe his legato playing was that it “flowed like oil.”

Mozart had very strong opinions about keyboard performance, and was not hesitant to express them. Mozart had no patience for pianists who fudged difficult passages. Once, Mozart sent a group of piano sonatas to his sister, Nannerl. Mozart encouraged her “to play them with plenty of expression, taste, and fire, and to learn them by heart.” But most importantly, Mozart wrote, they must be played “with the proper precision.”

While in Mannheim in the autumn of 1777, Mozart heard the young pianist Rosa Cannabich, daughter of composer Christian Cannabich. Mozart wrote to his father, Leopold:

If I were her regular teacher, I would lock up all her music, cover the keys with a handkerchief, and make her practice, first with the right hand and then with the left, nothing but passages, trills, mordents, and so forth, very slowly at first, until each hand should be thoroughly trained. I would then undertake to turn her into a first-rate clavierist.

Mozart also firmly believed that a pianist should employ as little extraneous movement as possible. In 1777, Mozart visited the home

## Piano Sonata No. 33 in C minor, Hob. XVI:20 (1771)

**Franz Joseph Haydn was born in Rohrau, Austria, on March 31, 1732, and died in Vienna, Austria, on May 31, 1809.**

🕒 *Approx. performance time: 17 mins.*

📅 *SMF performance history: SMF premiere*

In 1761, Franz Joseph Haydn began his years of service to the court of the Hungarian Esterházy family. At the time, the Kapellmeister of the Esterházy court was the Austrian composer, Gregor Joseph Werner. Haydn was Vice-Kapellmeister of the Esterházy court until Werner's death in 1766. From then until 1790, Haydn served as Kapellmeister to the ruling Prince Nikolaus Esterházy.

Haydn's contemporary biographer, G. A. Griesinger, described Prince Nikolaus as:

an educated connoisseur and a passionate lover of music, and also a good violin

of the famous Augsburg piano maker, Johann Andreas Stein. Mozart watched Stein's daughter, Nanette, perform at the piano. Mozart wrote to his father, Leopold:

Anyone who sees and hears (Nanette Stein) play and can keep from laughing, must, like her father, be made of stone ("stein" is the German word for "stone"). For instead of sitting in the middle of the clavier, she sits right up opposite the treble (i.e., the right portion of the keyboard), as it gives her more chance of flopping around and making grimaces. She rolls her eyes and smirks.

Mozart commented: "I do not make grimaces, and yet play with such expression that, as (Johann Stein) himself confesses, no one up to the present has been able to get such good results out of his pianofortes."

But the perceived lack of effort in Mozart's performances was the product of tremendous discipline and practice. In 1784, Mozart played for the Dutch keyboard artist, Georg Friedrich Richter. After Mozart finished, Richter exclaimed: "Good God! How hard I work and sweat—and yet win no applause—and to you, my friend, it is all child's play." Mozart replied: "Yes, I too had to work hard, so as not to have to work hard any longer."

Mozart completed his Piano Sonata No. 14, K. 457, in Vienna on October 14, 1784. The composer dedicated the work to his student, Therese von Trattner, the wife of the wealthy Viennese publisher and book dealer, Johann Thomas von Trattner. Mozart also dedicated his Fantasia in C minor, K. 475 (1785), to Therese. At one time, Mozart lived with the Trattners, and he often concertized in their Vienna home.

I. *Molto Allegro*—The Sonata opens with the dramatic juxtaposition of a *forte* initial statement with the far more subdued response (this was a device Mozart used frequently, and to great effect; such as, the opening movements of his 1785 Piano Quartet in G minor, K. 478, and 1788 Symphony No. 41 in C Major, K. 551, "Jupiter"). A graceful and flowing major-key second theme provides contrast. The exposition closes with a reference to the opening theme. Likewise, the brief, tempestuous development section focuses upon that initial theme. The minor key predominates in the recapitulation. The brief, agitated coda finally resolves to a *pianissimo* whisper.

II. *Adagio*—The Sonata's slow-tempo movement is in rondo form. The *Adagio*'s noble central melody (*sotto voce*) appears at the outset. The

melody both alternates with other episodes and, upon each reappearance, undergoes elaborate transformations. The *Adagio*'s hushed lyricism is maintained to the closing bars.

III. *Allegro assai*—The finale is also in rondo form. Set in 3/4 time, the finale's principal theme is a minuet tinged with melancholy, juxtaposing the voices of the right and left hand. Here, Mozart reverses the sequence of the opening movement, as the hushed opening confronts a stark, *forte* reply. The theme alternates with contrasting episodes. Frequent pauses add to the tension, as the C minor Sonata proceeds to a forceful conclusion.

### 12 Variations on "Ah, vous dirai-je maman," K. 265/300e (ca. 1781-2)

 Approx. performance time: 10 mins.

 SMF performance history: SMF premiere

Mozart was a brilliant improviser, an artist who could be given a melody and, on the spot, create a virtuoso piece bursting with creativity and variety. A sense of that talent may be gleaned from Mozart's theme and variations compositions for the keyboard, including the 12 Variations on "Ah, vous dirai-je maman," K. 265/300e. It was at first believed that Mozart composed this work during his 1778 stay in Paris. Mozart's mother Anna Maria, who accompanied the composer on that journey, died in Paris on July 3, 1778, at the age of 57.


However, handwriting analysis by the 20th century German musicologist Wolfgang Plath place the variations during Mozart's initial years in Vienna. Regardless of the origin of their composition, the 12 Variations on "Ah, vous dirai-je maman" remains a beloved work.

The piece opens with a presentation of the familiar melody, used not only in the French nursery rhyme "Ah, vous dirai-je maman" ("Ah, will I tell you, mother"), but as the basis of several other children's songs, including "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." Twelve variations follow, many quite brilliant, including the last (*Allegro*) that brings the work to a bracing conclusion.

### Air from Holberg Suite, Opus 40 (1884)

Edvard Grieg was born in Bergen, Norway, on June 15, 1843, and died there on September 4, 1907.

 Approx. performance time: 6 mins.

 SMF performance history: SMF premiere

Edvard Grieg wrote his *Holberg Suite* as part of the celebrations commemorating the bicentennial of the birth of the Norwegian writer, Ludvig Holberg (1684-1754). Considered the father of Scandinavian literature, Holberg was often called "the Molière of the North." Like Grieg, Holberg was born in Bergen, Norway.

Grieg originally composed his *Holberg Suite* as a series of solo piano pieces he called *From Holberg's Time*. Holberg lived during the same period as such great Baroque composers as Telemann, J.S. Bach and Georg Frideric Handel. And so, Grieg sought to evoke the mood and style of a Baroque keyboard suite.


Grieg performed the original piano version of the *Holberg Suite* at the 1884 Holberg bicentennial celebration in Bergen. The Suite immediately earned the audience's approval. Grieg later arranged the work as a "Suite in the Olden Style for String Orchestra." The *Holberg Suite*'s expert and winning combination of Baroque structure and Romantic lyricism has long charmed audiences. It remains one of Grieg's most popular works.

The *Holberg Suite*, following Baroque tradition, opens with a Prelude, followed by several dance movements. This concert features the fourth-movement *Air*.

IV. *Air. Andante religioso*—The *Air* is set in a measured tempo that Grieg directs be played in a singing fashion (*cantabile*) and with "religious" spirit. During the course of the *Air*, the principal melody is cast in both the minor and the major. The *Air* concludes with a fervent prayer that finally reduces to a whisper.

### Variations sérieuses, Opus 54 (1841)

Felix Mendelssohn was born in Hamburg, Germany, on February 3, 1809, and died in Leipzig, Germany, on November 4, 1847.

 Approx. performance time: 12 mins.

 SMF performance history: 3/26/09

On July 15, 1841, Mendelssohn wrote to Karl Klingemann (the friend who accompanied the composer on the 1829 journey to Scotland that

inspired the *Hebrides Overture* and “Scottish” Symphony):

Can you guess what I've just been composing—and passionately? Variations for piano! Eighteen of them on a theme in D minor, and I had such enormous fun with them that I immediately went on to some on a theme in E flat, and now I'm on my third one in B flat. It's just as though I had to make up for lost time in never having written any before.

The Variations in E-flat Major and B-flat Major were published after Mendelssohn's death as Opus Nos. 82 and 83. The *Variations sérieuses*, published as Mendelssohn's Opus 54, remain by far the most admired and performed of the composer's three works in this genre. The *Variations sérieuses* explore an extraordinary range of colors, moods, and even musical eras, ranging from the 18th-century Baroque (a period Mendelssohn took a keen interest in) to the heights of Romanticism.

*Tema. Andante sostenuto*

*Var. I*

*Var. II. Un poco più animato*

*Var. III. Più animato*

*Var. IV*

*Var. V. Agitato*

*Var. VI. a tempo*

*Var. VII*

*Var. VIII. Allegro vivace*

*Var. IX*

*Var. X. Moderato*

*Var. XI. cantabile*

*Var. XII. Tempo di Tema*

*Var. XIII. sempre assai leggiero*

*Var. XIV. Adagio*

*Var. XV. poco a poco più agitato*

*Var. XVI. Allegro vivace*

*Var. XVII*

*Presto*