

## PROGRAM NOTES BY KEN MELTZER

## SEBASTIAN KNAUER, PIANO

Wednesday, April 10 at 11 am  
Trinity United Methodist Church

**WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART**  
(1756–1791)

***Fantasia in C minor, K. 475 (1785)***

**FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809–1847)**  
***Selections from Songs Without Words***  
**(1829–1845)**

Opus 53, No. 2 in E-flat Major (1835–41)  
Opus 53, No. 3 in G minor (1835–41)  
Opus 67, No. 3 in B-flat Major (1841–5)  
Opus 30, No. 6 in F-sharp minor, “Venetian  
Gondola Song” (1833–4)  
Opus 38, No. 2 in C minor (1835–7)  
Opus 85, No. 4 in D Major (1834–45)

**FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797–1828)**  
***Selections from Four Impromptus,***  
**D. 899 (1827)**

III. *Andante*

IV. *Allegretto*

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)**  
***Piano Sonata No. 14 in C-sharp minor,***  
***Opus 27, No. 2 (“Moonlight”) (1801)***

I. *Adagio sostenuto*

II. *Allegretto*

III. *Presto agitato*

***Fantasia in C minor, K. 475 (1785)***

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

🕒 *Approximate performance time is 13 minutes.*

📅 *SMF performance history: 3/27/12, 3/28/07, 3/19/07*

Mozart completed his *Fantasia in C minor, K. 475*, in Vienna on May 20, 1785. Mozart dedicated the *Fantasia* to his piano student, Therese von Trattner, the wife of the wealthy Viennese publisher and book dealer, Johann Thomas von Trattner. For a period in 1784, Mozart and his wife Constanze roomed with the Trattners in their Vienna home. Mozart also held several subscription concerts for his own benefit there.

In addition to the *Fantasia*, Mozart dedicated his Piano Sonata, No. 14, K. 457 (1784), to Therese von Trattner. In 1785, Artaria published both the *Fantasia* and Sonata No. 14 (also in C minor) as a single work. But the *Fantasia* stands proudly on its own as a remarkable concert piece.

Although Mozart dedicated the *Fantasia* to Therese von Trattner, there is documentation he performed the work in concert. And indeed, the *Fantasia* in C minor showcases many of the extraordinary talents for which Mozart was so celebrated.

Mozart’s contemporaries were virtually unanimous in their praise of his brilliance as a keyboard artist. Muzio Clementi, 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’s extraordinary gifts as a keyboard artist and composer found expression in his gift of improvisation. Mozart could be presented with a melody and, on the spot, create from it a brilliant, compelling piano work. But Mozart’s talents as

a composer were hardly limited to the keyboard. He excelled in virtually every genre available at the time, both instrumental and vocal. This of course included opera, and such masterpieces as *The Marriage of Figaro* (1786), *Don Giovanni* (1787), *Così fan tutte* (1790), and *The Magic Flute* (1791).

All of these talents coalesce in the C minor *Fantasia*. With its ever-shifting moods and dramatic—indeed, theatrical—intensity, the *Fantasia*, K. 475, is an “opera without words,” with the pianist assuming the roles in a miniature tragedy.

The *Fantasia*’s episodes, played without pause, are as follows:

*Adagio—Allegro—Andantino—Più allegro—Tempo primo*

**Excerpts from *Songs Without Words***  
**(1829–1845)**

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

🕒 *Approximate performance time is 16 minutes.*

📅 *SMF performance history: 3/27/12, 3/26/09*

Mendelssohn composed a total of 48 works for solo piano entitled *Songs Without Words*. They were published in eight groups of six “songs.” The first six groups were published between 1830 and 1845 (Opus Nos. 19b, 30, 38, 53, 62 and 67), and the final two after the composer’s untimely death (Opus Nos. 85 and 102). The *Songs Without Words* quickly became immensely popular, both in concert halls and drawing rooms throughout Europe and indeed, the world. These charming miniatures are remarkable for their diversity of mood and color and, of course, captivating lyricism.

Mendelssohn observed that when he wrote the various *Songs Without Words*, he was thinking of:

The song, just as it stands. Even if, in one or other of them, I had a particular word or words in mind, I would not want to tell anyone, because the same word means different things to different people. Only

the song says the same thing, arouses the same feeling, in everyone—a feeling that can't be expressed in words.

Opus 53, No. 2 in E-flat Major (*Allegro non troppo*) (1835–41)

Opus 53, No. 3 in G minor (*Presto agitato*) (1835–41)

Opus 67, No. 3 in B-flat Major (*Andante tranquillo*) (1841–5)

Opus 30, No. 6 in F-sharp minor, “Venetian Gondola Song” (*Allegretto tranquillo*) (1833–4)

Opus 38, No. 2 in C minor (*Allegro non troppo*) (1835–7)

Opus 85, No. 4 in D Major (*Andante sostenuto*) (1834–45)

### Excerpts from Four *Impromptus*, D. 899 (1827)

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

🕒 *Approximate performance time is 8 minutes.*

📅 *SMF performance history: 4/06/11, 4/04/04*

1827 was a year of tremendous hardship and struggle for Franz Schubert. The Austrian composer was suffering extreme financial challenges, as well as the ravages of illness that would take his life the following year, at the age of only 31.

In the autumn of 1827, Schubert completed his great song cycle for solo voice and piano, *Winterreise* D. 911 (1827). *Winterreise*, Schubert's setting of poems by Wilhelm Müller, relates the heartbreaking narrative of a jilted lover who embarks upon a desolate winter's journey. Schubert invited a group of his friends to hear him perform *Winterreise*: “Come to (Franz von) Schober's today, I will sing you a cycle of awe-inspiring songs. I am anxious to know what you will say about them. They have affected me more than has been the case with any other songs.” When Schubert sang his *Winterreise*, “in a voice wrought with emotion,” the composer's friends were stunned. As Josef van Spaun recalled, “From then on, he was a sick man.”

Despite all of these challenges, Schubert's creative powers were at their apex. In addition to *Winterreise*, other masterpieces composed in 1827 include the *Fantasy* in C Major for Violin and Piano, D. 934, as well as three works for piano, violin, and cello—the *Notturmo*, D. 897, and the *Trios*, D. 898 and 929. As Robert Schumann wrote in 1836 of Schubert's Piano Trio, D. 898: “One glance at it and the troubles of our human existence disappear and the whole world is fresh and bright again.”

Two sets of four Piano *Impromptus*, D. 899 and 935, also date from 1827. Schubert composed the first set, D. 899, in the summer of that year. It appears that the title, *Impromptus*, was not given to the first set by Schubert, but by the work's publisher, Haslinger. This was, perhaps, an attempt to capitalize on the popularity in Vienna of an earlier set of piano *Impromptus*, Opus 7 (1822), by the Bohemian composer Jan Václav Voříšek (1791–1825). Schubert completed the second set, D. 935 in December, and did assign the title of *Impromptus* to them. In both sets of *Impromptus*, the melodic inspiration, captivating beauty, and remarkable variety of moods in these treasured works are Schubert's alone.

*Andante*—D. 899 *Impromptu* No. 3, in G-flat Major, is a song without words. Over rippling accompaniment, the right hand sings the unforgettable melody, by turns serene and yearning. A more agitated central episode yields to a reprise of the opening melody.

*Allegretto*—The final D. 899 *Impromptu*, in A-flat Major, is in A–B–A form. In the opening “A” section, quicksilver sixteenth notes alternate with hymn-like chords. Later, the sixteenth notes join forces with a robust left-hand melody. The central *Trio*, in C-sharp minor, projects a troubled contrast. The “A” section returns, leading to a *fortissimo* resolution.

**Piano Sonata No. 14 in C-sharp minor, Opus 27, No. 2 (“Moonlight”) (1801)**  
**Ludwig van Beethoven was baptized in Bonn, Germany, on December 17, 1770, and died in Vienna, Austria, on March 26, 1827.**

🕒 *Approximate performance time is 16 minutes.*

📅 *SMF performance history: 3/28/17, 4/04/16, 3/24/11, 3/28/05*

In 1801, following the completion of his Piano Sonata, No. 15, Opus 28 (“Pastoral”), Beethoven informed his friend, Wenzel Krumpholtz: “I am only a little satisfied with my previous works. From today on I will take a new path.” While traveling this “new path,” Beethoven journeyed beyond the conventions of his time to write revolutionary compositions that forever changed the course of music.

The composition most often associated with launching Beethoven's “new path” is his great Symphony No. 3 in E-flat Major, Opus 55 (“Eroica”), which premiered in Vienna in April of 1805. But in truth Beethoven had, for some time, been exploring new and exciting terrain. A notable and beloved product of this exploration is his Piano Sonata No. 14 (“Moonlight”) (1801).

The tradition of the 18th century Classical era, inherited by Beethoven, dictated that piano sonatas open with a movement cast in what is termed “sonata form.” This musical structure, typically set in brisk tempo, features the introduction (exposition), development, and recapitulation of central thematic material.

But in the “Moonlight,” (and in the contemporaneous Sonatas Nos. 12 and 13), Beethoven jettisoned the sonata-form opening movement. Beethoven referred to both the Sonatas Nos. 13 and 14 (published collectively, as Opus 27, Nos. 1 and 2) as a “Sonata quasi una Fantasia.” Both sonatas begin with atmospheric and improvisational slow-tempo movements. In the case of the Sonata No. 14, that movement inspired the work's famous nickname, albeit one not assigned by Beethoven.

I. *Adagio sostenuto*—The first movement, in A–B–A form, opens with a series of flowing triplets that ultimately serve as accompaniment for the haunting melody, launched by a dotted-rhythm figure. The triplet figures take center stage in a yearning “B” section. The reprise of the opening section is capped by two *pianissimo* chords.

II. *Allegretto*—The brief second movement, set in 3/4 time, is in the spirit of a minuet. The principal theme soon features right versus. left hand effects, continued in the central *Trio* section. The *Allegretto* concludes with a reprise of the opening section.

III. *Presto agitato*—The finale sweeps aside the introspection of the first two movements. Here, Beethoven returns to sonata form. The initial theme is a scurrying, ascending figure, capped by a pair of *sforzando* chords. The second theme is a plaintive melody, with sixteenth-note accompaniment in the left hand. Another melancholy theme closes the exposition. The restless character of the exposition continues in the development. A moment of repose yields to the recapitulation of the principal themes. In the coda, brilliant passagework leads to another brief respite (*Adagio*). The closing principal theme reappears, leading to the “Moonlight” Sonata’s stormy conclusion.