

1974-75 Chamber Music Series

Ronald Patterson, Violinist
Brooks Smith, Pianist



HAMMAN HALL
8:30 p.m.
JANUARY 16, 1975

SSM
75.1.16
PAT

Program

Sonata No. 2 in A Major, Op. 100

Johannes Brahms
(1774-1856)

Allegro amabile
Andante tranquillo; Vivace
Allegretto grazioso (quasi Andante)

Sonata (1920)

Ernest Bloch
(1880-1959)

Agitato
Molto quieto
Moderato

Intermission

Sonata in A Major, Op. 47 ("Kreutzer")

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Adagio sostenuto; Presto
Andante con Variazioni
Finale: Presto

Program Notes

SONATA NO. 2 IN A MAJOR, OP. 100

Brahms wrote this lovely, lyrical work during the summer of 1886 while he was vacationing in Switzerland on the lake of Thun. The summer was a happy, creative one during which he also composed the second cello sonata and the C minor trio. The present work is far more placid than the other two, its sweet and tender first movement indicated in the tempo marking *amabile*. The second theme may well be a citation from one of Brahms' own songs; he refers to two others in the course of the sonata.

The form in each movement is simple and succinct. He compresses the traditional slow and fast movements into a single central movement, miraculously balancing the short *andante* sections with the longer but faster-moving *vivace*. Each return of the slow portion is varied, first expanded then contracted, and the movement concludes with a brief final statement of the fast motive.

The third movement is a rondo, though not in the fast tempo and character of a traditional rondo. Rather, it is broad and richly expansive in its lyricism and at the same time, beautifully concise in its form.

SONATE 1920

Ernest Bloch, born in Switzerland of Jewish parents, is most often identified with his great Hebrew rhapsody for violoncello and orchestra, *Schelomo*, or with works like the three *Hebrew Poems* for orchestra. However, the composer's own words give an insight into the danger of too close an identification of all his works with Jewish music per se: "I do not propose or desire to attempt a reconstruction of the music of the Jews, and to base my works on melodies more or less authentic... I believe that the most important thing is to write good and sincere music - my own music. It is rather the Hebrew spirit that interests me, which I seek to feel within me and to translate in my music."

This distillation of the Hebrew spirit is amply demonstrated in the sonata of 1920, written shortly after Bloch's appointment as director of the Cleveland Institute of Music. Certain rhythmic and melodic motives have a mid-eastern sound, but they are an essential part of Bloch's personal musical profile.

The opening three-note motive has a savage vitality which continues through nearly all the movement. A motive based on a rising fourth and falling third appears in various guises throughout the sonata, providing a logic to this seemingly rhapsodic work. Typical is the reverse dotted rhythm (short-long) which appears in the second and third movements. The central movement, eerie and impressionistic, calls for violin harmonics and a unique, strumming *pizzicato*. Its calm beginning and ending balance the passion of the two outer movements. The last movement is characterized by repeated figures in the piano, shifting meters, and a fierce intensity of expression.

SONATA IN A MAJOR, OP. 47 ("KREUTZER")

One of the best-known of Beethoven's ensemble works today, this sonata was composed in 1803 and bears the significant title, *Sonata for the pianoforte and an obligato violin*, written in a very brilliant concertante style, almost like a concerto. It was originally performed by George Bridgetower, a London violinist who was in Vienna at the time, with Beethoven himself at the piano. However, it seems that the two men eventually quarrelled over a girl and Beethoven dedicated the work to the great French violinist and composer, *Rafalphe Kreutzer*.

The work was considered incomprehensible by its first reviewer. Berlioz later writes that Kreutzer "could never bring himself to play this outrageously unintelligible

Program Notes (continued)

composition." Early 19th-century ears were unaccustomed to the fact that the violin's slow introduction in *A major* is immediately turned to the minor by the piano, and the original key is not heard again until the third movement. The fiery presto that follows served as the basis for a novella by Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, in which a husband murders his wife due in part to passions aroused by the music.

The second movement is a classical set of theme and variations, providing an excellent foil to the preceding movement. Beethoven intended the third movement to be part of another sonata (Op. 30, No. 1), but decided it was too brilliant for that work and transferred it to the present sonata. Because its two subjects are similar in their bouncing 6/8 rhythm, Beethoven occasionally inserts a quiet passage in duple meter to guard against rhythmic monotony. The movement is a satisfying close to this brilliant duo-sonata.

Ronald Patterson

In October 1974 Rice University's Shepherd School of Music was delighted to announce the formation of its first resident professional performing group, the Shepherd String Quartet, of which Ronald Patterson, concertmaster of the Houston Symphony Orchestra, will be the first violinist. Acknowledged as one of the outstanding young violinists in the country, Patterson is also a brilliant teacher. He will provide individual instruction and coaching in chamber music and orchestral styles to Shepherd School students in addition to his performing duties with the Quartet and with the Symphony.

Patterson attended the Aspen Music School (1960-64) and the University of Southern California (1962-64) and studied with Jascha Heifetz for two years (1964-67).

He joined the Houston Symphony as concertmaster in 1972, coming from that position with the Denver Symphony. In 1964, at the age of 21, he became the youngest concertmaster in any metropolitan orchestra in America when he was chosen for that post with the Greater Miami Philharmonic. In 1970, he won the Certificate of Merit in the Fourth International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow.

Brooks Smith

Brooks Smith is a consummate musician, one of the most eminent and widely respected accompanists in the country. Formerly a member of the faculty of the Eastman School of Music, he has recently become affiliated with the School of Music at the University of Southern California. He is the regular accompanist of Jascha Heifetz, with whom Patterson studied.