

*SHEPHERD SCHOOL
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA*

LARRY RACHLEFF, conductor

NORMAN FISCHER, cello

Sunday, October 5, 1997

8:00 p.m.

Stude Concert Hall

RICE UNIVERSITY

the
Shepherd
School
of Music

PROGRAM

Symphony No. 38
in D Major, K. 504 "Prague"

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

Adagio. Allegro
Andante
Presto

INTERMISSION

Ionisation

Edgard Varèse
(1883-1965)

Symphony for Cello
and Orchestra, Op. 68

Benjamin Britten
(1913-1976)

Allegro maestoso
Presto inquieto
Adagio
Cadenza
Passacaglia. Andante allegro

Norman Fischer, soloist

In consideration of the performers and members of the audience, please check audible paging devices with the ushers and silence audible timepieces. The taking of photographs and use of recording equipment are prohibited.

SHEPHERD SCHOOL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Violin I

Michael Arlt,
concertmaster
Yi Ching Fong
William Fedkenheuer
Caroline Semanchik
Angie Smart
Brinna Brinkerhoff
Rita Lammers

Violin II

Adam DeGraff,
principal
Matthew Szemela
Caroline Pliszka
Mary Katrina Pierson
Emma Phillips
Angela Marroy

Viola

Matthew Dane,
principal
Jonathan Brown
Misha Galaganov
Kimberly Buschek

Cello

Jeffrey Zeigler,
principal
Nisse Nøstbakken
Benjamin Noyes
Lisa McCormick
Emma Sponaugle

Double Bass

Gilbert Deshaies,
principal
David Molina
Christopher Simison

Flute

Julie Duncan
Caroline Kung
Merrie Siegel

Piccolo

Caroline Kung

Oboe

Julie Gramolini
Rosemary Yiameos

Clarinet

Carrie Budelman
Leesa Nimitz

Bass Clarinet

Leesa Nimitz

Bassoon

Shasa Dobrow
Amy Yang

Contrabassoon

Shasa Dobrow

Horn

Kristina Crago
Jeffrey Garza

Horn (cont.)

Elizabeth Matchett

Trumpet

Jens Larsen
Brian Seitz

Trombone

Steven Wills

Tuba

Bryan Smith

Timpani and Percussion

John Andress
Marc Dinitz
Rachel Dobrow
Patrick Kelly
Phillip Mikula
Scott O'Neil
Trent Petrunia
Scott Pollard
Phillip Rothman
Lucas Scanlon
Karen Slotter
Douglas Smith
Che-ming Tsai

Orchestra Manager

Martin Merritt

Orchestra Librarian

Angie Smart

WINDS, BRASS, AND PERCUSSION LISTED ALPHABETICALLY.

STRING SEATING CHANGES WITH EACH CONCERT.

UPCOMING ORCHESTRA CONCERTS

Saturday, November 1, 8:00 p.m. - SHEPHERD SCHOOL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Larry Rachleff, conductor Alastair Willis, guest conductor
PROGRAM: Ives - *Central Park in the Dark*; Ravel - *Piano Concerto in G Major*
(Eliza Ching, soloist); and Elgar - *Enigma Variations*.
Stude Concert Hall. Free Admission.

Sunday, November 2, 8:00 p.m. - SHEPHERD SCHOOL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Larry Rachleff, conductor Scott O'Neil, guest conductor
PROGRAM: Phillip Ratliff - *The Howling Infinite* (Premiere); Beethoven -
Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major, Op. 58 (Akiko Konishi, soloist); and Brahms -
Serenade No. 2 in A Major, Op. 16. Stude Concert Hall. Free Admission.

PROGRAM NOTES

Symphony No. 38 in D Major, K. 504 . . . Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Until recently Mozart's final three symphonies (K. 543, 550, and 551) were treated as a distinct and inviolable entity: the highest assertion of the Classical symphony, the revered apogee of Mozart's orchestral output, the final anguished cry *de profundis* before his voice was silenced forever in 1791. However, with the relaxation of romantic associations with the last three symphonies, scholars have found increasingly a correlation between these fully mature works and the symphony directly preceding them, the "Prague," completed on December 6, 1786. In its favor, K. 504 is sufficiently enigmatic to merit inclusion in the mythic final trilogy.

In mid-January 1787, in the heyday of Bohemian fervor for *Le nozze de Figaro* (K. 492), Mozart undertook his first journey to Prague. As his first biographer Franz Xaver Niemetschek (himself a resident of Prague) described the musical ethos of the time, "All the connoisseurs and artists of our capital were Mozart's staunch admirers, the most ardent ambassadors of his fame; ... all his works were recognized and appreciated at their true value." The "Prague" is noticeably more difficult than his previous orchestral works, both in terms of performance and concept; this may reflect the superiority of Prague's instrumental forces (albeit as hailed by Bohemian reviewers) and the musical intellectuality of its audiences (*idem*). *Symphony No. 38* was premiered on January 19, 1787, at Prague's National Theater.

Mozart composed the "Prague" after a three-year hiatus from symphonic composition. Instrumentally, late 1786 signals the close of a transitional period in which Mozart schooled himself in extending long movements built of one subject. As he emerged from the cocoon of experimentation, he produced the "Prague," the harbinger of a new, richer, and more widely varied style. *Symphony No. 38* retains the extension and variation learned from the constraints of writing one-subject movements, but regains the contrast of including a second subject in the first movement.

The one point of contention when arguing the work's revolutionary aspects is its essential form: it is a three-movement symphony. By circa 1760, Viennese composers were writing four-movement symphonies; Haydn composed no three-movement symphonies after 1765. Certainly by the 1780s, composers had long since abandoned the three-movement format. Despite the lack of a Minuet in the "Prague," it is still one of Mozart's lengthiest symphonies. The argument may be made that the work is satisfyingly complete without another movement; no musical question remains whose answer might have been found in a Minuet.

The symphony opens with a staggering Adagio introduction of thirty-six bars. What is surprising in this gesture is its subtle ambiguity — the major mode is not established until the second beat of bar three, and at bar sixteen the key shifts to the tonic minor, where it remains until the end of the introduction. The subsequent Allegro has been considered by some critics to be the greatest first movement of any in the Mozart canon. Here, the composer approaches his motives contrapuntally; he betrays a great thematic consciousness and adaptability. This treatment is the direct ancestor to the Finale of the "Jupiter" Symphony (K. 551) and its compositional hubris of five-part

invertible counterpoint. The second movement, *Andante*, begins as a restful *pastorale* but soon disrupts itself in subtle chromaticism. The *Finale* (*Presto*) affects another modification of symphonic writing in its treatment of the winds in an extended wind-band solo at bars 31-46. Mozart may have been responding to the excellence of wind playing in Vienna since the establishment of the *Harmonie* (wind-band) by Emperor Joseph II a few years before. From this standpoint, some scholars have argued that the symphony was as much Viennese as it was a product of Prague. Whichever city provided the creative impetus for the composition of **Symphony No. 38**, Mozart has left us with a work of enduring mastery and finesse, and one that retains meaning in performance regardless of civic placement.

Ionisation Edgard Varèse

The decision of Edgard Varèse to compose a work for thirteen percussion players using no less than thirty-seven instruments was not merely an act of futurist insolence, but rather an attempt to construct a musical form unrelated to harmonic progression and an expression of his love of urban sounds. His journey towards the liberation of percussion is reflected in two previous works for large orchestra, *Amériques* of 1926 and *Arcana* of 1927. **Ionisation** is a crystallization of his desire to transgress the limits of formal instruments and to explore new sound qualities and timbres. To this effect, he enhanced his percussion section with two sirens and various instruments of his own invention, largely unpitched. Indeed, pitch assumes a subsidiary role to the primacy of rhythm in this work; definite pitches assert themselves only in the last bars, with three chords shared between the piano, *glockenspiel*, and tubular bells.

Varèse completed **Ionisation** in 1931 during a five-year stay in Paris. It was not premiered until two years later, on March 6, 1933, at Carnegie Hall. Conducted by Nicolas Slonimsky, to whom the work is dedicated, it was received with the expected flurry of ridicule and condemnation. **Ionisation** reflects Varèse's love of science. He spoke of music as "organized sound" and an "art-science," a study linked with the regimentation of mathematics. However, the romantic concept of science attracted him more than its actual methodology. In this sense, **Ionisation** is not a programmatic representation of chemical processes; its title is evocative of a more vague scientificism.

Ionisation remains Varèse's most popular, signature work. Though only six minutes long, it became the catalyst for even greater change in his method of composition. Once he had made the leap of faith to include non-formal instruments in his works, the step towards electronic music was not great.

Symphony for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 68 Benjamin Britten

The work which now is touted as Benjamin Britten's most accomplished instrumental composition, **Symphony for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 68**, originally merited a fair amount of debate, largely over its musical identity. Was the work a symphony or a concerto? Jeremy Noble, in his review of the work's first London performance on July 15, 1964, asserted that it was "neither the symphony its title claims . . . nor the concerto it implies," and declared it instead a "hybrid." This confusion of status stems from the work's vigorous use of the orchestra vis-à-vis the solo cellist's relatively unvirtuosic proposition; the cello does not exploit the traditional dichotomy between soloist and accom-

paniment. The work has been deemed more a sonata for cello and orchestra, with equal partnership between the two constituents.

The Cello Symphony is the product of a ten-year collaboration with the cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, who provided the guiding inspiration for five of Britten's cello works: the Sonata, the three Suites, and the Cello Symphony. Britten composed the Cello Symphony largely in March 1963 while visiting the Soviet Union. The work was premiered in Moscow on March 12, 1964, with Rostropovich as soloist and Britten as conductor.

The first movement is the most regimented sonata-form movement of the work; its development is exactly as long as its exposition and saves the full union of themes for the coda. The Scherzo that follows exploits to the highest a three-note intervallic pattern (tone-semitone), put to use with chilling effects of mutes, ponticello, and col legno bowing. If the first movement represents a full realization of the sonata principle, the Scherzo is its antithesis. It contains only the slightest da capo to complete the movement's continuing variation. The profound Adagio and cello cadenza which follow serve as a crucial pivot to the final movement. The Passacaglia's main theme, first introduced by the trumpet, is based on a phrase from the Adagio. The Passacaglia bass, which is sustained in the six following variations, is first heard pizzicato in the solo cello in accompaniment to the opening trumpet theme.

Britten's **Symphony for Cello and Orchestra**, despite its ambiguity of nomenclature, achieves distinction through conceptual economy and thematic cogitation. It remains one of the most interesting works written for solo instrument and orchestra.

— Notes by Angela Marroy

BIOGRAPHY

NORMAN FISCHER is one of this country's foremost exponents of the cello. After completing instrumental study with Richard Kapuscinski, Claus Adam, and Bernard Greenhouse, he first graced the international concert stage as cellist with the Concord String Quartet, a group that won the Naumburg Chamber Music Award, an Emmy, and several Grammy nominations, recorded over forty works on RCA Red Seal, Vox, Nonesuch, Turnabout, and CRI, and premiered over fifty compositions. His New York solo debut playing the Six Suites of J. S. Bach in one evening was hailed as "inspiring" by The New York Times. In addition to performing the major concerti, Mr. Fischer has premiered and recorded several new American scores for cello and orchestra. During the 1994 Broadway season, Mr. Fischer's recording of William Bolcom's unaccompanied cello music was featured in the premiere of Arthur Miller's **Broken Glass**. His chamber music expertise has led to guest appearances with the Juilliard, Cleveland, Emerson, and Audubon string quartets, the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, and Da Camera of Houston. A member of the Concord Trio and Ensemble Pierrot, he collaborates frequently with pianist Jeanne Kierman as the Fischer Duo. A devoted teacher and mentor to younger players, Mr. Fischer taught at Dartmouth College and the Oberlin Conservatory before accepting the position of Professor of Violoncello at The Shepherd School of Music. Mr. Fischer holds the prestigious Beatrice Sterling Procter Chair at the Tanglewood Music Center, and follows the late Louis Krasner in that position.