

GUEST ARTIST RECITAL

ANDREW JENNINGS, Violin

*The Complete
Caprice Variations (50)
for Solo Violin
by George Rochberg*

Wednesday, March 31, 2010

8:00 p.m.

Lillian H. Duncan Recital Hall

RICE UNIVERSITY

the
Shepherd
School
of Music

PROGRAM

50 Caprice Variations (1970)

for solo violin

George Rochberg

(1918-2005)

1. *Allegro energico*
2. *Presto*
3. *Allegro molto e con fuoco*
4. *Poco Allegro ma quasi recitando*
5. *Poco Agitato ma con molto rubato*
6. *Poco allegretto ma con rubato*
7. *Presto*
8. *Languido*
9. *Non troppo presto*
10. *Vivace*
11. *Andante*
12. *Andante con moto*
13. *Feroce*
14. *Alla guitarra; allegretto con molto rubato*
15. *Con grazia; un poco agitato*
16. *Andante amoroso*
17. *Poco Adagio*
18. *Allegro fantastico*
19. *Vivace*
20. *Quasi cadenza; andante con molto espressivo*
21. *Allegro con brio*
22. *Molto espressivo e cantando*
23. *Andante grazioso e tranquillo*
24. *Allegretto*
25. *Scherzo*
26. *Con brio*
27. *Aria*
28. *Molto agitato*
29. *Lento ma non troppo*
30. *Poco Allegretto e leggiere*
31. *Molto Adagio*
32. *Allegro assai Burlesco*
33. *Moderato con umore*
34. *Molto adagio*
35. *Allegro molto; fantastico*
36. *Largo sereno*
37. *Barcarole*
38. *Can-can tempo; presto*
39. *Elegiac: fantastico*
40. *Robust*
41. *Allegro molto*
42. *Nocturnal: slow*
43. *Andantino*
44. *Scherzo*
45. *Presto*
46. *Bravura sempre recitando; "in the grand manner"*
47. *Arabesque: Fantastico*
48. *Moderately fast: Fantastico*
49. *Feroce*
50. *Fantasy*
51. *Quasi Presto: Theme*

THE CAPRICES ONE-BY-ONE

1. An overture, or maybe better, a fanfare complete with blaring brass and a celebration of drums.
2. An intense and virtuosic display of feverish activity which calls to mind (only for the first time) Mahler.
3. and 4. A couplet of variations sharing virtually identical harmonic and orchestrational textures but taking opposite emotional viewpoints.
5. A bit of "night music" as Bartók would have described; mysterious and eerie.
6. Continuing in the mysterious vein but much more whimsical in nature.
7. Beethoven marks his scherzo from the "Harp" quartet forte or fortissimo but *leggieramente* ("lightly") Rochberg in his paraphrase of the theme keeps both markings but seems to clearly be making a joke of it all.
8. Another paraphrase, this time of Schubert, but here the music comes at us a bit from the past in a series of phrase-lets and their far-away echoes.
9. The first of a set of five Brahms quotes. Here a clear two-part conversation written out in piano-style, right-hand versus left-hand. (except that we have to play it with one hand only)
10. A Brahms dialogue again, this time harder to perceive but with a compelling and gradual motion from compact intervals to widely stretching ones.
11. This Brahms quotation (note-for-note) takes on a very different feeling from the original since the violin must play both melody and accompaniment at the same time.
12. Another literal quote from Brahms but with the focus shifted much more to intervallic *espressivo* than the harmonic *espressivo* of the original.
13. Last of the Brahms set, all virtuosity and display.
14. A total break of texture and the only variation to be played exclusively *pizzicato*.
- 15., 16. and 17. Three love songs, the first ardent, the second langorous and the last rather whimsical.
18. This banshee scream is also the opening of Rochberg's seminal Third Quartet and shatters the calm of the previous variations.
19. Moving to the material which closes the Third Quartet is a variation of unendurable ferocity which does not lessen one bit throughout.
20. The first of a pair of variations (the other being No. 46) which play on the notion of the "romantic" virtuoso violinists – free, spontaneous and passionate.
21. Beethoven returns in this whirlwind parody of the Seventh Symphony theme.
22. A complex variation in spite of its brevity which pairs off many types of dialogue.
23. Another love song. George's music is filled with these songs and he clearly wrote them for his wife Gene.
24. Brahms again – this time the Violin Concerto in fragmentation.
25. A scherzo of original materials with a hemiola rhythm at its heart.
26. The second of a pair of scherzos (with the preceding variation) witty and acerbic.

27. Bach for the first time, although not a quotation, simply the kind of many-voiced writing on a single instrument the great master perfected in his works for solo violin and cello.

28. Again passionate and intense with dense harmonic textures reminiscent of Mahler.

29. and 30. A pair of luxurious songs which have always sounded to me a bit reminiscent of South Sea Island travelogues and were used as variations in the middle of the slow movement of the Third Quartet.

31. Jekyll and Hyde contrast pervades this variation: a placid and expressive melody of three-note patterns alternating with very disturbing and "threatening" undertones.

32. Rochberg played piano in bars and lounges to earn his living after the war and he will frequently return to a kind of "bawdy" music on occasion as in this "burlesco."

33. Stravinsky appears here with Pulcinella's charm and impish humor.

In a way variations 34, 35 and 36 are the heart of the set, the focal center of the challenge of this work. 34 is the most wrenching of expressions, a fact belied by its utter simplicity of means. There is a kind of keening in its dissonances. 35 goes to the opposite extreme: it is simply ugly; violent, brutal, almost blood-thirsty. 36 is to my mind the most "beautiful" of the whole set. It became the theme of the variations of the Third Quartet which George later transcribed for orchestra and titled "Transcendental Variations." It is truly transcendent.

37. The Barcarolle has its origins in the songs of the seas and the rocking motion of the water is very present here.

38. Another of the "bawdies," this time a can-can.

39. The fantasy form was very appealing to Rochberg, he seems to have been able to be both very free and very structured at the same time and this is the first of several "fantastic" variations.

40. The expressive temperature rises here leading us toward romantic excess?

41. In ways the most problematic of the whole set, both musically and violinistically. It stretches us in ways not always comfortable but with undeniable profile and intensity.

42. Night music, this time considerably more up-to-date than that of Bartók.

43. Antiquities again, not Bach but rather, in George's own words, the ethos of Haydn.

44. Mahler, a direct quote from the Fifth Symphony, and the only directive to the performer is "wild!"

45. Night music for a third time and, although he does not credit it, a strong reference to the finale of the Bartók Fifth Quartet.

46. The other half of the "virtuoso" pair (with No. 20) Here, the image of the great Belgian master, Ysaye, seems very strong.

47. through 50. are a series of the Fantasy variations, somewhat angular and dissonant in vocabulary.

51. Finally the germ, the Paganini theme, however, it has not escaped George's critical eye

BIOGRAPHY

ANDREW JENNINGS is Professor of Violin and Chamber Music at the University of Michigan. His principal teachers were Ivan Galamian, Alexander Schneider, Pamela Gearhart, and Raphael Druian. He was a founding member of the Concord String Quartet, a new ensemble that quickly gained international recognition by winning the Naumberg Chamber Music Award in 1972 and which performed more than 1200 concerts throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe. Specializing in the performance of new works (with an emphasis on American composers), this Quartet gave more than fifty premieres and commissions; it also performed the standard repertory and thirty-two cycles of the complete Beethoven quartets and made numerous recordings, three of which were nominated for Grammy Awards. Mr. Jennings maintained his association with this Quartet until it disbanded in 1987. The Concord Trio, which Mr. Jennings subsequently formed with Norman Fischer and Jeanne Kierman, debuted in 1993.

Mr. Jennings' teaching career began at Dartmouth College where members of the Concord Quartet were engaged as artists-in-residence from 1974 to 1987. Later he served on the faculty of Oberlin College. He currently devotes his summers to chamber music instruction at the Tanglewood Music Center in Massachusetts where he holds the Beatrice Proctor Master Teacher Chair. His recordings can be found on RCA, Nonesuch, Vox, Turnabout, Equilibrium, Danacord, and MMO.



This event is co-sponsored by Da Camera of Houston.