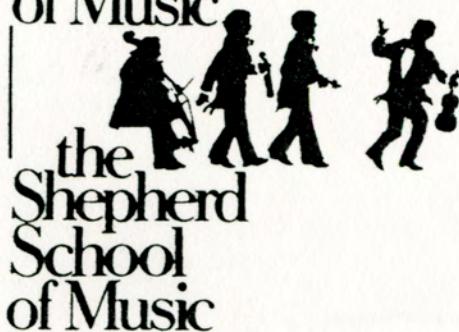


Houston  
Friends  
of Music



PRESENT

**Christoph Eschenbach**  
*Piano*

and

**Uri Pianka**  
*Violin*

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1992

8:00 P.M.

STUDE CONCERT HALL

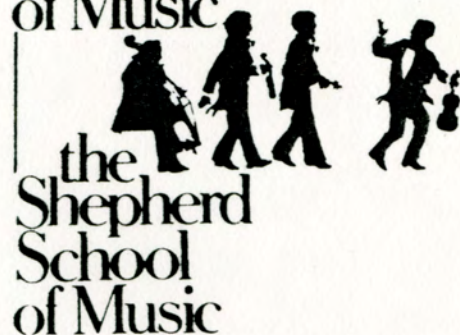
AT

ALICE PRATT BROWN HALL  
RICE UNIVERSITY

*Thirty-second Season — Sixth Concert*

Houston Friends of Music is a non-profit organization dedicated to the presentation of chamber ensembles with national and international reputations, and to the development of new audiences.

Houston  
Friends  
of Music



PRESENT

**Christoph Eschenbach, *Piano***  
and  
**Uri Pianka, *Violin***

**PROGRAM**

**Ludwig Van Beethoven**

**Sonata in D, Op. 12 #1**  
*Allegro con brio*  
*Andante con moto*  
*Rondo-Allegro*

**Johannes Brahms**

**Sonata #1 in G, Op. 78, "Regenlied"**  
*Vivace ma non troppo*  
*Adagio*  
*Allegro molto moderato*

**INTERMISSION**

**Franz Schubert**

**Rondeau Brilliant in c, D. 895 (Op. 70)**  
*Andante-Allegro*

**César Franck**

**Sonata for Piano and Violin in A**  
*Allegretto moderato*  
*Allegro*  
*Recitativo-Fantasia-Moderato-Molto lento*  
*Allegretto poco mosso*

The Steinway Piano used by Maestro Eschenbach for tonight's performance  
is furnished by the Forshey Piano Company.

Photographing and sound recording are prohibited.

We further request that audible paging devices not be used during performances.

Paging arrangements may be made with ushers.

If it is anticipated that tickets will not be used, subscribers are encouraged to turn them in for resale.  
This is a tax-deductible donation. Call 285-5400.

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# PROGRAM NOTES

## Preface

The history of the sonata for violin (or other instrument) and keyboard is interesting notably for the shift in emphasis from one to the other instrument. In the popular imagination, the so-called solo instrument took precedence and the piano brought up the accompanying rear (recordings by noted violin virtuosi fostered this notion) yet if the titles themselves are indications, then the emphasis is on the keyboard--Haydn's, Mozart's, Beethoven's, and even Franck's are all sonatas for *piano* and violin.

It would be simple to say that this was the Classical Age's response to the Baroque Period when the keyboard--the harpsichord--was indeed the accompanist never playing anything but the thoroughbass line. With the invention of the clavichord and then the pianoforte, composers were provided with instruments of greater volume, tonal personality, and the ability to play loud and soft, short and long notes--in brief, the flexibility of expression equal to the other instruments.

Composers consequently began experimenting with the balance between the soloists, as they would between the soloist and orchestra in the concerto. Our program offers four variations on the subject of balance spanning almost a century.

### LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

(1770-1827)

#### SONATA IN D, Op. 12 #1

Beethoven's sonatas alone provide a clear picture of the realignment of balances. With the notable exception of Mozart's sonatas, most if not all Classical sonatas did place the keyboard to the forefront. Beethoven's first essays in the genre, the Op. 12 set, are indeed entitled "Three Sonatas for harpsichord or fortepiano, with a violin." The title belies the relationship, for in Beethoven's mind, the instruments collaborate and complement each other, striving toward an equality. He did finally achieve this in his ninth and penultimate sonata--and most famous--the *Kreutzer* (Op. 47) which, though still labelled "Sonata for piano and an *obbligato* violin," he described as "*molto concertante quasi come d'un concerto*--very concerted like a concerto." Concerted as in togetherness; concerto as in competition of equals.

The Opus 12 set of three were probably composed between 1797 and 1798, just after Beethoven began sketching his first string quartets. They are dedicated to Antonio Salieri, teacher, composer and power-broker. Beethoven was twenty-six and had been trying to make his way in the Viennese musical world since arriving there in 1792.

The sonata begins with a declamatory statement by both instruments in unison before each pursues his own line, sometimes in support of, in answer to, or even independent of the other.

The second movement is a reflective theme with

four variations, each instrument alternating in the accompanist's role as the other explores the theme in the first pair of variations, followed by two duos, the first in brisk Hungarian style.

The final movement is a *rondo* built on a jaunty piano tune answered by the violin, alternating with slightly more serious passages led by the violin as if to furrow the brow of the sun with the piano chiming in to disperse the clouds.

### JOHANNES BRAHMS

(1833-1897)

#### SONATA #1 in G, Op. 78

Brahms was, by nature, a shy, diffident individual, acutely aware of his own inadequacies, especially in the area of large-scale works, and the burden imposed on him by admiring friends--especially Robert Schumann--who expected him to follow in the inimitable Beethoven's footsteps. Of his large symphonic works, critic Bernard Shaw would dismiss him as a "leviathan maunderer."

In his chamber and solo piano pieces Brahms was more confident and was more able to show the gentle, equivocal facets of his Romantic nature.

This sonata, his so-called First was published in 1879, when he was forty-six. Not his first attempt at the genre, he had composed a youthful sonata for himself and the celebrated violinist Eduard Remenyi to play on tour. The score of that early work has completely disappeared.

The Op. 78 Sonata, composed in 1878, followed the creation of his first two symphonies and the Violin Concerto to which some have likened it a gentle addendum. As with his large works, especially the concerti, Brahms was concerned with the balance of the voices and achieved in the sonata what Siegfried Kross has called "a symphonic relationship," which we might compare with the "concerto" quality of Beethoven's *Kreutzer* three-quarters of a century earlier.

The work's nickname is derived from a pair of songs on the same melodic material and same subject of rain which Brahms composed for Clara Schumann in 1873 to ameliorate her depression. In that single year her son Ludwig was institutionalized with the disease which had destroyed her husband, her daughter Julie (whom Brahms loved) died, and her son Felix (Brahms' godson) was diagnosed with tuberculosis.

The first song's first line is "[Dreams] I dreamed in childhood [when] the soul breathed free as the flowers." The second song, *Nachklang* (After-echo) likens falling raindrops to the tears of adults.

Brahms began composing the sonata while visiting Felix in Sicily after the boy's disease was pronounced incurable. Felix died February 15, 1879.

The sonata was sent to Clara not long thereafter with a note, "it would be a great joy to me if I could create some little thing in his memory." Clara responded, "I really had to weep for joy...when I...rediscovered my melody which I love so fondly! I say mine because I don't believe that this melody brings such bliss and sorrow to anyone else but me!" While the tune is quoted in the third movement, it is alluded to throughout the work which one critic has described as "a composition full of restrained sweetness and that longing inwardness which--as so often with Brahms--seems to laugh beneath the tears."

The opening movement's first theme is an engagingly unaffected rhapsody for violin over the piano's dotted rhythms, while the second subject introduces a more passionate, agitated expression over the same hesitant rhythmic pattern, the raindrops of the song.

The second movement begins with the piano's melancholy refrain, heightened by the violin's song of longing. An air of resolution is introduced with an expressive funeral march, a striking contrast like the *trio* in the middle of a *scherzo* movement.

The final movement is a rondo using the actual melody of the songs as its principal theme--the piano's agitated figures the raindrops themselves.

## FRANZ SCHUBERT

(1797-1828)

### RONDEAU BRILLANT IN c, D. 895

Schubert's last two years on earth were remarkable in the quantitative as well as qualitative musical output of his genius. Some of his grandest, greatest creations were born in those years of pain and evident mortality--also, some of his smaller but not necessarily lesser works.

Written for his friends, violinist Josef Slawjk and pianist C. M. von Bocklet, the *Rondeau Brilliant* was first performed in the home of Domenico Artaria who published it later in that year 1827 as Schubert's Op. 70 (one of the very few works published in his lifetime). Not long thereafter it received a public performance of which a Viennese critic effusively declared:

*...The spirit of invention has here often beaten its wings mightily indeed and has borne us aloft with it. Both pianoforte and violin require an accomplished performer who must be equal to passages which have not achieved as it were, their right of citizenship by countless repetition, but which reveal a new and inspired succession of ideas.*

Alfred Einstein has suggested that this work, along with the Fantasy in C, D. 934, were written for Slawjk in place of a violin concerto which Schubert promised but never wrote, as well as part of a projected series of sonatas like Beethoven's which was never realized except for the Sonata in A, D. 574, written a decade before but not published until 1851. Einstein likens the relationship of this rondo to that sonata as the *Wanderer Fantasy* is to the piano sonatas.

The portentous exclamatory opening returns in a variety of guises contrasting with the Hungarian-flavored dance episodes in which the piano sets the tune.

## CESAR FRANCK

(1822-1890)

### SONATA IN A

Auguste Jean Guillaume Cesar Franck was born in the Belgian city of Liege in 1822. After establishing himself as a piano virtuoso at eleven, a student at the Paris Conservatory in his late teens, he settled in Paris in 1844, which accounts for his being acclaimed and claimed as one of France's foremost men of music.

As a composer, Franck made his mark rather late in his life, having devoted himself to playing the organ at St. Clotilde where he impressed the likes of Franz Liszt with his improvisatory genius, and as pedagogue at his alma mater where he was named Professor of Organ in 1872. Few people attended a "retrospective" concert given in his honor in 1887 by Vincent d'Indy and other former students and fewer are aware today of how prolific he was as a composer.

In addition to the famous Symphony in d, Variations Symphoniques and this sonata, he wrote operas, symphonic poems, seven large-scale religious works (the oratorio *Les Beatitudes* took ten years to complete), chamber music, and in his very last year, *L'Organiste* - a collection of fifty-nine pieces for harmonium.

In his later compositions he developed a cyclic form of musical structure in which a theme recurs throughout the entire work.

The Sonata in A was composed in 1886 as a wedding gift for Eugène Ysaye, the great Belgian violin virtuoso.

The first movement, which one critic has called the work's "poetic prelude," begins with a gossamer nocturnal love song ascending gradually in passion to a brief climax before descending to its moonlit calm again. The recurring first theme is offered by the violin, the second by the piano.

The second movement is in a distinctly contrasting mood of agitation and almost muscular passion until settling briefly into a disquieting version of the first movement before strenuously pursuing the towering emotions again.

In the third movement, the sonata's opening climate is recreated while two new themes, contrastingly tranquil and passionate, are introduced.

In the last movement the forthright lyrical theme in the form of a canon attempts to interrupt recollections of the previous movements, like "couplets of a song," as one commentator has put it.

*Program notes by Ira J. Black*

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

### CHRISTOPH ESCHENBACH

#### *Music Director*

Christoph Eschenbach officially became music director of The Houston Symphony of September 1, 1988 and follows a distinguished line of past music directors including Leopold Stokowski, Sir John Barbirolli, and Andre Previn. Previously, Maestro Eschenbach was music and artistic director of the Tonhalle Orchestra of Zurich and principal guest conductor of the London Philharmonic.

Maestro Eschenbach had already earned a distinguished international reputation as a concert pianist before turning to conducting in 1972. Born in Breslau, Germany, he first studied piano with his mother. Subsequently, he continued his piano studies in Hamburg with Eliza Hansen, and also studied conducting with Wilhelm Bruckner-Ruggeberg, both of whom he regards as the principal mentors of his artistic development.

Christoph Eschenbach's career has been highlighted by winning several major prizes, including the Steinway Young Pianist Competition at age eleven and the International Music Competition in Munich at

age twenty-two. His career as a pianist was heightened by the award of first prize in the Clara Haskil Competition in Lucerne in 1965. After making his American debut in 1969 with the Cleveland Orchestra, conducted by George Szell, he appeared as soloist with all the major orchestras throughout the world and was widely heard in recital.

Meanwhile, he continued to study conducting with George Szell. His conducting debut came in Hamburg in 1972, with a performance of Bruckner's Symphony No. 3. His North American conducting debut was with the San Francisco Symphony in 1975. In 1978, Christoph Eschenbach made his operatic conducting debut, and since then has been a regular guest at major opera houses. His 1990-91 season included engagements with Houston Grand Opera where he was acclaimed for his conducting of *Don Giovanni*, *Così fan tutte*, and *The Marriage of Figaro*. At present he is conducting the HGO production of Wagner's *Parsifal*.

Christoph Eschenbach has also appeared at leading American summer festivals such as Tanglewood (where he has made 15 appearances), Ravinia, Blossom, Hollywood Bowl, and the Mostly

Mozart festivals of both New York and Houston. He has appeared at many European summer festivals, including the Festival de Tours in France, the Schleswig-Holstein Festival with Sviatoslav Richter as soloist, and a festival tour of Australia and Europe with the Australian Youth Orchestra.

Christoph Eschenbach records for Virgin Classics with The Houston Symphony. Recent recordings include Tobias Picker's **The Encantadas**, narrated by Sir John Gielgud, and Dvorak's Symphony No. 9, "From the New World" and Tchaikovsky's **Francesca da Rimini**.

In the dual role of conductor and pianist, Christoph Eschenbach's recordings include the Mozart concertos for two and three pianos with Justus Frantz and former West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt (an accomplished amateur pianist) with the London Philharmonic.

## URI PIANKA

### *Concertmaster*

Uri Pianka, concertmaster of The Houston Symphony, came to Houston from the Israel Philharmonic, where he held the position of concertmaster for 18 years under the direction of Zubin Mehta, Leonard Bernstein, and many other great conductors. While living in Israel, Mr. Pianka was chosen to appear as violin soloist in every Israel Philharmonic foreign tour abroad as well as during the regular subscription series.

During Mr. Pianka's 1985 tour with the Israel Philharmonic, the **Los Angeles Herald Examiner** described him as a "very serious, very self-assured violinist" whose playing is "big in tone, grand in gesture...the playing of a major soloist." The **Los Angeles Times** commented, "Pianka has the style and the transparency for Saint-Saens' Gallic elegance as well as the spirit and the sparkle. His tone is supple and lucent, his technique unerring and his accuracy of intonation far above average."

Mr. Pianka was invited to appear as soloist with the Frankfurt Radio Orchestra, Israel Radio, Pittsburgh Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, and others during the 1987-88 season. He has also performed extensively in the United States, Germany, Sweden, England, France, Spain, Japan, Australia, and throughout South America.

Mr. Pianka's performance of the Bartok violin concerto at the Barcelona Music Festival was greeted by the news media as the high point of that festival.

In 1987, he performed the Lutoslawski Violin Concerto in Bergen, Norway, with the composer conducting.

Mr. Pianka also performs as the violinist with the Yuval Trio, which he and his colleagues founded in 1969. The Trio has toured Europe, South America and the United States and has recorded trios by Dvorak, Smetana, Tchaikovsky, Brahms and Mendelssohn on the CBS and Deutsche Grammophon labels. Most recently, the Yuval Trio has recorded Tchaikovsky's Trio Op. 50 and Shostakovich's Trio Op. 67 on the Swiss Relief label. This compact disc was released in 1989, followed closely by three more. During the 1989-90 season, the Yuval Trio was a guest of the Houston Friends of Music series and performed concerts in San Antonio and Mexico.

In 1986, Mr. Pianka was invited to sit on the jury of the prestigious Jacques Thibaud Violin Competition in France.

Uri Pianka was born in Tel Aviv in 1937. He received his basic music education in Israel. At the age of 16 he was awarded a scholarship to the Juilliard School of Music in New York where he was accepted as a pupil of Ivan Galamian and Dorothy DeLay. In 1958, he won the first prize in the annual Juilliard Violin Competition and appeared as the soloist with the orchestra, playing the Samuel Barber Violin Concerto.

In 1967, he was a major prize winner in the Queen Elisabeth Violin Competition in Brussels.

Mr. Pianka lives in Houston with his wife and youngest daughter. He has a son and daughter who live in Israel.