

*SHEPHERD SCHOOL
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA*

LARRY RACHLEFF, music director

Sunday, November 2, 2003

8:00 p.m.

Stude Concert Hall

RICE UNIVERSITY

the
Shepherd
School
of Music

PROGRAM

**Overture to "The Marriage
of Figaro" K. 492**

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

Sinfonia Concertante in E-flat Major, K. 364

W.A. Mozart

Allegro maestoso

Andante

Presto

Kenneth Goldsmith, violin
Karen Ritscher, viola

INTERMISSION

Overture to "The Magic Flute" K. 620

W.A. Mozart

Sinfonia Concertante in E-flat Major, K. 297b

W.A. Mozart

Allegro

Adagio

Andantino con Variazioni

Robert Atherholt, oboe
Michael Webster, clarinet
Benjamin Kamins, bassoon
William Ver Meulen, horn

The reverberative acoustics of Stude Concert Hall magnify the slightest sound made by the audience. Your care and courtesy will be appreciated. The taking of photographs and use of recording equipment are prohibited.

PROGRAM NOTES

Despite the breadth and variety of his compositions, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart thought of himself primarily as an opera composer. One can even hear a “mini-opera” taking shape in many of his instrumental works. But Mozart’s operas provide the audience with more than mere aesthetic pleasure; the operas mirror a variety of political, social, and religious tensions in eighteenth-century Western Europe.

Written in 1786, **Le Nozze di Figaro** tells of a young maid and her fiancée and of a mischievous Count who unsuccessfully attempts to woo the maid and halt her marriage. Beneath the comic absurdity of **Le Nozze di Figaro**, the deliberate clash of social classes presents a new depth and seriousness in Italian opera buffa (“comic” opera). This playfulness is introduced in the overture as the opening bars whisper excitedly of the upcoming wedding day; yet in the overture, one can picture the Count’s ridiculous attempts to seduce the cunning maid. The overture displays constant thematic invention and transformation, but the tonality remains in the tonic/dominant realm of D major. In all of his works, Mozart uses keys to reflect an idea or create an atmosphere. This overture begins in the key of D major, and though different acts occur in different keys, the tonal goal of the entire opera is the return of D major. This goal runs parallel to the characters’ goal of restoring order to the wedding day.

Die Zauberflöte is a “magic” opera – a genre that combines ritual, allegory, and enlightenment ideals. Written just months before Mozart’s death in 1791, **Die Zauberflöte** asserts political and religious statements, including deliberate references to Free Masonry. **Die Zauberflöte** has a Bildungsoper plot – a plot of darkness (chaos) and light (clarity), in which the hero must endure trial and hardship before obtaining truth and love. The overture is a summation of the entire opera. The solemn trombone chords in the opening bars create an atmosphere of darkness and formality. However, the weight of the opening chords is lifted by the abrupt, fugal interruption of the second violins. The remainder of the overture – and the entire opera – alternates between these themes of darkness and light, chaos, and clarity.

Although the name might imply “symphony,” a *Sinfonia Concertante* is a type of concerto for two or more instruments. The *Sinfonia Concertante*, despite its brevity and lighthearted atmosphere, is also a reflection of eighteenth-century Western Europe, for it coincided with several social phenomena. As the Bourgeois class grew in prominence, musical concerts were no longer restricted to the royal court. Suddenly, composers confronted a more diverse and musically uneducated audience. What resulted was a genre characterized by pleasing melodies and dazzling instrumental solos.

Mozart wrote very few *Sinfonias Concertante*, but he is still considered a master of the genre. Perhaps his most famous, **Sinfonia Concertante in E-flat Major, K. 364** for violin and viola solo, was written in Salzburg in 1779. The original manuscript indicates the use of scordatura – a “mistuning” of a stringed instrument. In this instance, the viola is tuned a half tone higher, allowing for greater projection and clarity. This entire *Sinfonia* is a conversation between the violin and viola. After an unusually long orchestral introduction, the Allegro maestoso introduces both viola and violin, and the orchestra remains an integral part of the conversation. In stark contrast to the first and third movements, the Andante is characterized by serenity and even mournfulness. Very rarely does Mozart write a middle concerto movement in a minor key, but he so does here – moving from E-flat major in the Allegro maestoso to C minor in the

Andante. In the Andante, the violin and viola continue their dialogue, but a mere conversation has now turned to a duet, and often the violin and viola play together. The Presto, a "modified" rondo form, returns triumphantly to E-flat major, as the violin and viola playfully chase each other.

For years, scholars have debated the authenticity of the *Sinfonia Concertante in E-flat Major, K. 297b*, for solo oboe, bassoon, clarinet, and horn. The original manuscript has not survived, and this loss has forced scholars to speculate about the work's origin. Some suggest that Mozart wrote only the orchestral sections, and still others doubt that Mozart even composed this work. If K. 297b is Mozart's, it was written in Paris in April 1778 while Mozart was enjoying the overwhelming success of his "Paris" Symphony. The Allegro, Adagio, and Andantino con variazioni of K. 297b all remain in E-flat major, creating a somewhat static harmony. This lack of harmonic diversity has generated significant debate, for one of Mozart's great hallmarks was diversity within and between various movements. Yet perhaps K. 297b has been compared unfairly with the masterful "Paris" Symphony, for despite its static harmony, this *Sinfonia* still exhibits the elegant and whimsical delight so typical of Mozart.

— Notes by Hannah Mowrey

BIOGRAPHIES

KENNETH GOLDSMITH, violinist and co-founder of CONTEXT, a new group specializing in performance on both original and modern instruments, is Professor of Music at the Shepherd School of Music. As a recitalist and as soloist with orchestra, Mr. Goldsmith has toured the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Europe, Taiwan, and the People's Republic of China. Mr. Goldsmith has been concertmaster of several American symphony orchestras and has worked with such musical giants as Pablo Casals, Artur Schnabel, Leonard Bernstein, Sir John Barbiroli, Aaron Copland, and Zubin Mehta. Now in its twenty-eighth year, the Mirecourt Trio continues to be a primary performing ensemble for Mr. Goldsmith. With more than twenty recordings in its discography, the Mirecourt Trio is acclaimed for its superb command of the classic piano trio literature and for its adventurousness in expanding the repertoire with more than eighty new and commissioned works.

KAREN RITSCHER is in demand as a recitalist, chamber musician, soloist, and teacher. Currently Associate Professor of Viola and Chamber Music at the Shepherd School of Music, she has been a member of the Aureus Piano Quartet, the Steve Reich Musicians, the American Composers Orchestra, and the St. Luke's Chamber Orchestra. As a viola soloist, she has played with the Dallas Chamber Orchestra, the Rochester Chamber Orchestra, the Malibu Strawberry Creek Festival Orchestra, and the Westchester Symphony. She has previously taught at the Mannes College of Music, the Manhattan School of Music, the Eastman School of Music, and the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, as well as serving as an artist faculty member at such festivals as Bowdoin, Round Top, Aspen, Domaine Forget, and Musicorda.

ROBERT ATHERHOLT is currently Professor of Oboe at the Shepherd School of Music, a position he accepted in 2003 after having served as Principal Oboist of the Houston Symphony for twenty years. Before his full-time appointment, he taught at the Shepherd School since 1984. Prior to joining the

Houston Symphony, he was Principal Oboist of the New Jersey Symphony, a member of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and the Orchestra of St. Luke's, and Principal Oboist of the Opera Orchestra of New York. He has appeared frequently as soloist with the Houston Symphony. As a chamber musician, Mr. Atherholt was the solo oboist for the Houston Symphony Chamber Players, with whom he has toured Japan and Europe. He appears regularly with Da Camera of Houston and CONTEXT. He has performed as Guest Principal Oboist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in performances of Mahler's Seventh Symphony with Bernard Haitink conducting, and later served as Acting Principal Oboist on their European tour in 2000 with Seiji Ozawa conducting.

MICHAEL WEBSTER is known as clarinetist, conductor, composer, arranger, and pedagogue. Associate Professor of Clarinet and Ensembles at the Shepherd School of Music, he is also Artistic Director of the Houston Youth Symphony. Formerly principal clarinetist with the Rochester Philharmonic and the San Francisco Symphony, he has appeared as soloist with many orchestras, including the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Boston Pops. He has performed with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the 92nd Street Y, CONTEXT, Da Camera of Houston, the Tokyo, Cleveland, Muir, Ying, Leontyne Price, Chester String Quartets, and the festivals of Marlboro, Santa Fe, Northwest, Zilara, Angel Fire, Steamboat Springs, and Park City, among others.

BENJAMIN KAMINS is currently Professor of Bassoon at the Shepherd School of Music. He accepted this position in 2003 after having served as Principal Bassoonist of the Houston Symphony for twenty-two years. Before his full-time appointment at the Shepherd School, he taught there for sixteen years as a member of the faculty in an adjunct position. As a soloist with the Houston Symphony, he was often featured playing concertos of Mozart, Weber, and Vivaldi. In addition, he has served as a Guest Principal Bassoonist with the New York Philharmonic and the Boston Symphony. Mr. Kamins' musical activities outside Houston have taken him to numerous festivals including Marlboro, Ravinia, Tanglewood, Aspen, and Park City, among others.

Hailed as "an impeccable solo horn" by the Berlin Neue Zeit, WILLIAM VER MEULEN leads his generation of American horn soloists. Mr. Ver Meulen is Professor of Horn at the Shepherd School of Music, a position he accepted in 2003. Previously he was Principal Horn of the Houston Symphony for fourteen years. In addition, he served as Guest Principal Horn of the Los Angeles Philharmonic during the 1998-99 season. He previously played with the orchestras of Chicago, Columbus, St. Paul, Honolulu, Kansas City, and the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. Mr. Ver Meulen has participated as a performer and on faculty in numerous music festivals including Aspen, Tanglewood, Interlochen, Pacific, and Grand Teton, among others. He has performed to critical acclaim on four continents as a soloist and chamber musician and is a popular artist at the International Horn Symposium.

