

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM — JANUARY 24, 2006

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756 - 1791): QUARTET IN A MAJOR FOR FLUTE, VIOLIN, VIOLA AND CELLO, K. 298

Notes by Ingrid Fischer-Bellman

Mozart was baptized Johannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus. Both as a child prodigy, and later as a prolific adult composer, Mozart's musical genius has illuminated our world. Mozart is known to us by a name he chose, as he preferred the French and Latin version of his given name Theophilus (in Greek, Love God), signing his name Amadee and Amadeus.

The Flute Quartet in A major, K. 298 was long believed to be part of a group of flute quartets and concerti commissioned by the wealthy Dutch businessman and amateur flutist De Jean, whom Mozart met in Mannheim in 1777. When assembling his catalogue of Mozart's Compositions, Ludwig Köchel was misled by confusing references in the correspondence between Mozart and his father regarding this commission, and as a result, Köchel was in error in cataloguing and dating this work. Recent studies of the manuscript—dating the paper, evaluating the handwriting, and identifying quotes in the quartet from pieces written at a much later date—confirm that the piece was written in Vienna in the winter of 1786-87.

The manuscript was owned by Mozart's close friend, the Baron Gottfried von Jacquin, and was published after Mozart's death. It is likely that the quartet was composed for a circle of friends to whom he dedicated numerous chamber works, including the beautiful Trio (K. 498) for clarinet, viola and piano. This flute quartet is a musical joke parodying styles of contemporary composers. The short movements are just enough to get the point across, and provide the listener with an opportunity to see Mozart informally at play.

The first movement, a theme and variations is based on the song "*An die Natur*" by Hoffmeister, a friend of Mozart who was a flutist, composer and publisher. The third variation, marvelously written for viola, was most likely performed by Mozart himself. Here we realize why Mozart's writing is superior to that of his contemporaries. Mozart's ideas are fresh, there is a degree of surprise and unpredictability in how a phrase might turn, which harmonies are chosen or new rhythms employed. The shapes of the phrases are graceful in proportions. In the fourth variation the theme reappears in the flute, accompanied by a humorous, jolly bass line.

The second movement is a minuet and trio written in the same key. The trio quotes the French folk song "*Il a des Bottes, des bottes Bastien*". It is amusing that an elegant dance will quote a tune about boots... The accompaniment is predictable and simple.

The last movement, titled jokingly *Rondieaoux* (in Mozart's own fun spelling), follows with delightful instructions in Italian for choosing the proper tempo that the music, *Allegretto grazioso*, be performed: "*ma non troppo presto, pero non troppo Adagio, cosi-cosi-con molto garbo ed espressione*" which translates to "*not too fast but not too slow, just so-so--with great elegance and expression.*" The theme of the rondo is from an aria "*Chi mi mostra...*" ("*He who shows me my sweet love*") from the opera "*Le Gare Generosa*" by Paisiello, premiered in Vienna in the fall of 1786. Mozart remarked, in a letter about Paisiello's music, that it is transparent but has only entertainment value.

ARAM KHATCHATURIAN (1903 - 1978): TRIO IN G MINOR FOR CLARINET, VIOLIN AND PIANO

Notes by Cathleen Partlow Strauss

In honor of his 100th birthday, the year 2003 was declared "The Year of Aram Khachaturian" by UNESCO, an honor given only to those who have made remarkable contributions to the world's culture and arts. Khachaturian's unique contribution to music catapulted Armenian national music and its transformation to a new professional level.

A composer, conductor and teacher, Aram Khachaturian was born in Tbilisi and raised in the modest family of a book-binder. There were no professional musicians among his ancestors, yet the household stood out for its love of the arts, singing and folk music. He was educated in Moscow and spent much of his working life under the restrictions of the Soviet artistic policy which ordered that music should be tuneful, optimistic and rooted in folk song. Khachaturian did not find working under this restraint to be excessively compromising, though. Khachaturian's works are deeply rooted in Armenian melodies, rhythms and vitality. At the same time, they show the discipline of European and Russian musical classics.

This trio is a student work written while Khachaturian was enrolled at the Moscow Conservatory. It was completed in 1932, the same year as Khachaturian's well known Toccata for piano, but well before the ballets and concertos for which he would be known. Except for a few early duos, the Clarinet Trio is his only full-length chamber work. It is, nevertheless, a work fully

characteristic of his distinctive, exotic style. Prokofiev found it so strikingly original he urged for its performance in Paris.

None of the movements are crafted in a traditional sonata form and the key relationships are unusual. The trio begins in G minor and ends, against academic precedent, in C minor. The atmospheric first movement is a lyrical duet between the clarinet and violin over piano accompaniment, with ornamented passages in the manner of Armenian folk improvisation. The second movement opens scherzo-like and is clearly influenced by folk dance. After a relaxed folk tune on the clarinet, the middle agitato section combines the dance and song ideas. A presto cadenza leads to a triumphant, ornamented return of the folk melody and the movement ends with a scherzando section, as it began. The final Moderato is a set of variations on a folk-inspired tune. The theme, introduced by the clarinet, is then elaborated on by all three instruments as they weave increasingly varied rhythmic patterns around the melody. The rhythmic figure gains in importance as the movement progresses. Both melody and rhythm share the spotlight at the climax, after which the music gradually winds down before dissipating into nothingness.

FRITZ KREISLER (1875 - 1962): (FOUR SELECTIONS)

Notes by Cathleen Partlow Strauss

Among the most distinguished violinists of his time, and quite a storied character, Fritz Kreisler was born in Vienna. His father, a doctor, was also an avid amateur violinist. At the age of seven Fritz became the youngest student the Vienna Conservatory had ever admitted. At age ten he entered the Paris Conservatory and while still performing on a 3/4 size violin, the twelve-year-old Kreisler was awarded First Prize at the Paris Conservatory and graduated. That would be the end of his formal musical training. He embarked on his first concert tour at age thirteen, traveling Europe and the United States. After two years of concertizing his father insisted that Fritz get serious and catch up on his academic studies before he had to enlist for required Austrian military service. He crammed into two years all the subjects required for enrollment in university, and at age eighteen enrolled in medical school. After two years he left medical school. He found the surgical applications too distasteful. All during this period, he never touched the violin. At the age of twenty, he fulfilled the government's requirement to serve in the military for one year. And, he did occasionally play the violin during this time.

After his military service ended Kreisler spent the next five years struggling for world recognition as a concert violinist. By the 1900-1901 season he was performing all over the world...and chasing skirts. There is a famous story about how he had become attached to a young woman in Paris and, to satisfy her rather expensive tastes, he pawned his violin. He was so destitute by the end of the escapade he had to appeal to his father to come bail him out of his financial quandary. The following year the charismatic Kreisler performed 260 concerts...a grueling, chaotic schedule even by today's travel methods, but unimaginable at that time. By 1914 he was the leading violinist on the concert stage. Then, the unthinkable happened when he was called back to Austrian military service. This decision was decried internationally, but Kreisler reported for duty and served until he was injured in battle.

As Kreisler climbed the ladder to the position of a leading virtuoso, he felt that the violinist's repertoire was limited in scope and variety (compared to piano literature), so he began to compose pieces in different styles to use in his own concerts. These took the form of arrangements and transcriptions as well as a more controversial series of pieces attributed to composers of the past, but were in fact his own composition. Original compositions include the well known Liebesleid (Sorrow of Love), Tambourin chinois, Op. 3, Syncopation and the Praeludium and Allegro that he attributed to Gaetano Pugnani.

RICHARD STRAUSS (1864 - 1949): TILL EULENSPIEGEL - EINMAL ANDERS! GROTESQUE MUSICALE FOR VIOLIN, DOUBLE BASS, CLARINET, BASSOON, HORN (ARRANGED BY FRANZ HASENÖHRL)

Notes by Hsueh-Yung Shen, © 2003

This particular arrangement of Strauss' familiar tone poem Till Eulenspiegel is a bit of a mystery. It was published by Peters in 1954, which noted that it was "first performed by Members of the Wiener Philharmonisches Orchester." The arranger is listed as a Franz Hasenöhrl, which looks very much like a pseudonym. As the work was also subtitled "Grotesque musicale", it is clear that somebody is deciding to have a bit of fun with this staple of the orchestral repertoire.

Whoever did this arrangement at least handled it very skillfully. The five instruments, with the clarinet, bassoon, horn, violin, and contrabass, are very carefully chosen. The most important solos from the original manage to stay on their proper instruments, and the fullness of the tutti is surprisingly well conveyed. The most disconcerting aspect for those familiar with the original is that time is constantly condensed in this version; everything happens in a shorter time than the original, mostly through a relentless pruning of repetitions; passages which truly depend on the mass of the full orchestra are also relentlessly pruned. All this condensation and pruning of course is part of the joke; as Strauss is frequently accused of prolixity in many of his works, he takes on a much different aspect with a work shrunk by at least half in length.