



Emanuel Ax

Sunday Afternoon, April 22, 2018 at 4:00
Hill Auditorium
Ann Arbor

91st Performance of the 139th Annual Season
139th Annual Choral Union Series

This afternoon's recital is supported by Essel and Menakka Bailey, Retirement Income Solutions, Bob and Marina Whitman, and Ann and Clayton Wilhite.

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The Steinway piano used in this afternoon's recital is made possible by William and Mary Palmer.

Special thanks to Tom Thompson of Tom Thompson Flowers, Ann Arbor, for his generous contribution of floral art for this afternoon's recital.

Mr. Ax is a Steinway Artist.

Mr. Ax appears by arrangement with Opus 3 Artists.

In consideration of the artist and the audience, please refrain from the use of electronic devices during the performance.

The photography, sound recording, or videotaping of this performance is prohibited.

Program

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Sonata No. 15 in F Major, K. 533/K. 494

Allegro

Andante

Rondo: Allegretto

Franz Liszt

Années de pèlerinage, Deuxième année: Italie (excerpts)

Tre sonetti del Petrarca, S. 270b

Benedetto sia 'l giorno (No. 47)

Pace non trovo (No. 104)

I vidi in terra angelici costumi (No. 123)

Johann Sebastian Bach

Partita No. 5 in G Major, BWV 829

Praeambulum

Allemande

Courante

Sarabande

Tempo di Menuetta

Passepied

Gigue

Intermission

Ludwig van Beethoven

Andante Favori in F Major, WoO 57

Beethoven

Sonata No. 21 in C Major, Op. 53

Allegro con brio

Introduzione: Adagio molto —

Rondo: Allegretto moderato

SONATA NO. 15 IN F MAJOR, K. 533/K. 494 (1786–88)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Born January 27, 1756 in Salzburg, Austria

Died December 5, 1791 in Vienna

UMS premiere: Artur Schnabel; March 1935 in Hill Auditorium.

Snapshots of History...In 1788:

- The first edition of *The Times* is published in London
- Mozart completes his final symphony
- Georgia, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, South Carolina, New Hampshire, Virginia, and New York ratify the US Constitution and become states

In June 1786, Mozart wrote *Rondo in F Major* for piano. A year and a half later, he composed an *Allegro in F* and an *Andante in B-flat*; he eventually combined these movements and published them together as a sonata.

The first-movement “Allegro” opens with a melody played by the right hand without accompaniment (shortly thereafter, it is repeated by the left hand alone). This unusual opening mimics the exposition of a fugue that is not forthcoming at this point (it is not until later that the melody is developed in contrapuntal imitation). The movement is full of virtuoso passagework and many contrasting melodic and rhythmic ideas.

The “Andante’s” memorable and richly ornamented melodies are taken through a series of uncommon key changes that enhance their highly expressive quality even more.

The “Rondo” has a cheerful and easygoing opening theme, followed by several episodes that explore minor keys and through them, darker emotional realms. As

he was preparing the sonata for publication, Mozart thoroughly revised the movement, adding an extensive, concerto-like cadenza with some surprising harmonies and a contrapuntal section that matched a corresponding passage in the first movement. Mozart evidently wanted to bring the *Rondo* closer in style to the newly composed movements, and thereby unify a work whose parts had originally been conceived separately.

**ANNÉES DE PÈLERINAGE, DEUXIÈME ANNÉE: ITALIE,
(EXCERPTS) (1842, REV. 1846, 1858)**

Franz Liszt

Born October 22, 1811 in Doborján, Hungary (now Raiding, Austria)

Died July 31, 1886 in Bayreuth, Germany

UMS premieres: No. 47 has no record of ever being performed on a UMS recital, though there are several performances of the Liszt Sonetti that leave the numbers performed ambiguous. No. 104: Max Rabinowitch; February 1928 in Hill Auditorium. No. 123: Vladimir Horowitz; January 1930 in Hill Auditorium.

Snapshots of History...In 1842:

- The first pilsner beer is brewed in Pilsen, Bohemia (now Czech Republic)
- The New York Philharmonic and Vienna Philharmonic perform their first concerts
- The first inhaled anesthetic is administered to facilitate a surgical procedure

The three “Petrarch sonnets” started out as songs for voice and piano that, like many of Liszt’s works, went through a multitude of versions and revisions. On October 18, 1846, Liszt announced to his (by now estranged) companion, Countess Marie d’Agoult:

Among the next things that I am publishing, if you have time to concern yourself with them, you can look at (after Dinner) the 3 Petrarch sonnets...for Voice, and also very freely transcribed for Piano, in the guise of Nocturnes!

Even in the piano versions, the words of the 14th-century Italian classic fit the melodies perfectly. Each sonnet begins with an introduction leading up to the entrance of the “singer.” In the piano versions, the melodies are lavishly ornamented and occasionally interrupted by virtuoso cadenzas. The melodic writing itself was influenced

by the Italian *bel canto* style of Bellini, which for Liszt was almost synonymous with Italy.

Four years after the first publication, Liszt substantially revised all three piano sonnets, and the new versions were included in *Années de pèlerinage, deuxième année: Italie* (Years of Pilgrimage, year II: Italy), a collection published in 1858 and devoted to the memory of Liszt’s youthful sojourn in that country, when he and Marie d’Agoult were still in love. Two of their children were born there; the oldest daughter was born in Geneva — and not coincidentally, the first volume of *Années* was entitled “Switzerland.”

PARTITA NO. 5 IN G MAJOR, BWV 829 (1730)

Johann Sebastian Bach

Born March 21, 1685 in Eisenach, Germany

Died July 28, 1750 in Leipzig

UMS premiere: This piece has never been performed on a UMS recital. An arrangement for cello, mandolin, and bass was performed by Yo-Yo Ma, Chris Thile, and Edgar Meyer in April 2017 in Hill Auditorium.

Snapshots of History...In 1730:

- Pope Clement XII becomes the 246th pope
- The Ladoga Canal, one of the first major navigable canals in Russia, is constructed
- Shearith Israel, the first synagogue in New York City, is dedicated

In the world's first dictionary of music, published by Johann Gottfried Walther (1732), the entry on Johann Sebastian Bach makes mention of only one set of compositions: the six partitas for keyboard, the only works by Bach then in print. Walther was a cousin of Bach's; the latter had stood godfather to one of Walther's sons. He must therefore have had much more knowledge about Bach's works than he let on in his dictionary entry. Yet for many music lovers outside Leipzig, who had never heard the Thomaskantor improvise on the organ or direct one of his cantatas on Sunday morning, the 1731 publication of the six partitas, as "Op. 1," brought the 46-year-old master before a larger audience for the first time.

Actually, the publication of the partitas had begun in 1726. Bach had been bringing out one partita a year, printed at his own expense, and issued a collected edition when the set was complete. The title page read: "Keyboard Practice [*Clavier-Übung*] consisting of

Preludes, Allemandes, Courantes, Sarabandes, Giges, Minuets, and other Galanteries composed for the pleasurable diversion of music-lovers by Johann Sebastian Bach, Acting chapel master to the Court of Saxe-Weissenfels and Conductor of the Leipzig Musical Choir." Bach eventually published three more volumes of "Keyboard Practice" which include such masterpieces as the *Italian Concerto* and the *Goldberg Variations*; a fifth volume, containing *The Art of the Fugue*, was left unfinished at the time of Bach's death.

The partitas are akin to Bach's earlier English and French suites but, as David Schulenberg writes in his authoritative book *The Keyboard Music of J. S. Bach*, "the technical demands are greater...most of the dances are longer and diverge even farther from the traditional models than in the previous sets."

Each partita opens with an extended prelude; in each work, the prelude goes by a different name and has a different character. The

“*Preaembulum*” of the fifth partita has a main theme memorable in its simplicity; it alternates with elaborate, toccata-like figurations from which the theme periodically emerges, in a different key each time.

As a rule, Bach’s *Allemandes* have all but lost their original dance character and are precursors of later sonata movements. The “*Allemandes*” of the last two partitas are particularly ornate; the one in G Major contains occasional moments of imitation and a larger-than-usual rhythmic diversity in both hands.

Bach kept the writing light and simple in the “*Corrente*”; by contrast, the “*Sarabande*” introduces the texture of a trio sonata into solo keyboard music. The right hand plays two melodic voices filled with long grace notes producing exquisite dissonant clashes; the left hand answers in kind with a third voice that combines the functions of melody and accompaniment.

The next movement is not exactly a minuet, only a “*Tempo di Menuetta*.” For long stretches, the music doesn’t even resemble a minuet, with its broken triads organized in 6/8 time instead of 3/4. Then, suddenly, the typical cadential figure of the minuet appears, seemingly out of the blue. Unlike real minuets, this one does not have a trio, or middle section, at all.

A “*Passepied*” follows. This dance, which many writers see as a faster version of the minuet, may be found only a few times in Bach’s works. It is a graceful dance with characteristic French ornamental figures and a carefully maintained balance between a steady 16th-note motion and a more varied pattern of long and short notes.

The closing “*Gigues*” of the last four partitas are really fugues masquerading as dance movements. The present one is particularly sophisticated, with two separate subjects. The first subject is developed in the first half of the movement; the second half begins with a new subject, distinguished by a characteristic trill and combined with the first subject in the final portion of the “*Gigue*.”

**ANDANTE FAVORI IN F MAJOR, WOO 57 (1803–04)
SONATA NO. 21 IN C MAJOR, OP. 53 “WALDSTEIN” (1804)**

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born December 16, 1770 in Bonn, Germany

Died March 26, 1827 in Vienna

UMS premiere: *Andante Favori in F Major* has never been performed on a UMS recital. *Sonata No. 21 in C Major, Op. 53*; April 1883 in a general lecture room.

Snapshots of History...In 1804:

- Haiti gains independence from France
- The Lewis and Clark Expedition begins
- US Vice President Aaron Burr shoots former US Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton during a duel

The “Waldstein” Sonata is as much of a quantum leap after Beethoven’s early piano sonatas as the “Eroica” is after the Second Symphony.

Composed around the same time, both symphony and sonata revolutionized their respective genres, and not only because of their increased length and their numerous harmonic, melodic, and structural innovations — although these are certainly part of the reason why these works are such important milestones in the history of music. But there is something else, something larger, having to do with the very idea of what a symphony or a sonata is all about. More than a means to mark a festive occasion or to brighten up a cultivated amateur’s home, the music of Beethoven’s middle period communicates with an intensity never seen before, plumbs new levels of emotional depths no previous music had reached, and portrays conflict and struggle in completely unprecedented ways.

To reach these new goals, Beethoven had to resort to new

methods. Starting a sonata with a symmetrical musical phrase in the form of a question and answer, as Mozart and Haydn used to do, no longer suited the purpose. Instead, Beethoven started with something less definite, less fully formed, something that could be built up and transformed in the course of a complex development. The repeated C-Major chords opening the sonata are the kind of unassuming material with which the composer can do whatever he wants. Transposition, fragmentation, and rhythmic acceleration are just technical terms that superficially describe what happens; they do not do justice to the gradual opening-up of the music, its constantly growing excitement, and its irresistible momentum. The concept of “secondary theme” receives a whole new meaning here; all the previous processes suddenly seem to be reversed as we hear a chorale-like melody in a distant key, as if coming from a different universe. The way the two worlds are subsequently

integrated is one of the greatest wonders of the piece, and it is through that integration that the internal conflicts are resolved.

Beethoven had originally planned a full-fledged slow movement for this sonata, one he later chose to publish separately (this movement is known as the *Andante Favori*). Today, Mr. Ax plays this beautiful lyrical piece before performing the “Waldstein” in its definitive form, which contains a much shorter statement in the middle, a suspenseful transition and introduction to the radiant and expansive finale. The struggles and sharp contrasts of the first movement give way to a bright and sunny landscape. This time we get the big opening melody that was withheld in the first movement: a soaring melody that reigns supreme through much of the movement. There are a few darker moments when this theme temporarily yields to other ideas, some in the poignant minor mode — yet the ending is positively ecstatic.

Count Waldstein, the dedicatee of the sonata, was the nobleman from Bonn who had sent Beethoven on his way to Vienna with the words: “You shall receive Mozart’s spirits from Haydn’s hands.” More prophetic words were never spoken. Even though Beethoven’s apprenticeship with Haydn didn’t work out as planned, it soon became clear that he was Haydn’s and Mozart’s only true musical heir. It was Waldstein’s good fortune not only to see his prediction come true, but also to continue enjoying the friendship of his now-famous protégé.

Program notes by Peter Laki.

UMS ARCHIVES

This afternoon's recital marks **Emanuel Ax**'s sixth appearance under UMS auspices, following his UMS debut in July 1978 in a recital in Rackham Auditorium. He returned in December 1991 for a recital with Yo-Yo Ma, and again in February 1998 with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra conducted by Hugh Wolff, and in November 2008 in a joint recital with pianist Yefim Bronfman, all in Hill Auditorium. He most recently appeared under UMS auspices in March 2012 as part of the San Francisco Symphony's American Mavericks Festival as soloist performing Morton Feldman's *Piano and Orchestra* conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas.

ARTIST

Born in modern day Lvov, Poland, **Emanuel Ax** moved to Winnipeg, Canada, with his family when he was a young boy. His studies at The Juilliard School were supported by the sponsorship of the Epstein Scholarship Program of the Boys Clubs of America, and he subsequently won the Young Concert Artists Award. Additionally, he attended Columbia University where he majored in French. Mr. Ax made his New York debut in the Young Concert Artists Series, and captured public attention in 1974 when he won the first Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Competition in Tel Aviv. In 1975, he won the Michaels Award of Young Concert Artists followed four years later by the coveted Avery Fisher Prize.

In partnership with frequent collaborator David Robertson, he began the current season with six Mozart concerti over two weeks in St. Louis, repeating the project in Sydney in February. Following the gala opening of the Philadelphia Orchestra's season with Yannick Nezet-Seguin, he returns to the orchestras in Cleveland, New York, San Francisco, Boston, Houston, Ottawa, Toronto, Indianapolis, and Pittsburgh, and to Carnegie Hall for a recital to conclude the season. In Europe, he can be heard in Stockholm, Vienna, Paris, London, and on tour with the Budapest Festival Orchestra. In support of the recent release of their disc of Brahms Trios for Sony, Mr. Ax toured across the US with colleagues Leonidas Kavakos and Yo-Yo Ma during the winter.

Always a committed exponent of contemporary composers, with works written for him by John Adams, Christopher Rouse, Krzysztof Penderecki, Bright Sheng, and Melinda Wagner already in his repertoire, most recently he has added

HK Gruber's *Piano Concerto* and Samuel Adams' *Impromptus*.

A Sony Classical exclusive recording artist since 1987, recent releases include Mendelssohn trios with Yo-Yo Ma and Itzhak Perlman, Strauss' *Enoch Arden* narrated by Patrick Stewart, and discs of two-piano music by Brahms and Rachmaninoff with Yefim Bronfman. In 2015 Deutsche Grammophon released a duo recording with Mr. Perlman of sonatas by Fauré and Strauss, which the two artists presented on tour during the 2015–16 season. Mr. Ax has received Grammy Awards for the second and third volumes of his cycle of Haydn's piano sonatas. He has also made a series of Grammy-winning recordings with cellist Yo-Yo Ma of the Beethoven and Brahms sonatas for cello and piano. His other recordings include the concertos of Liszt and Schoenberg, three solo Brahms albums, an album of tangos by Astor Piazzolla, and the premiere recording of John Adams's *Century Rolls* with the Cleveland Orchestra for Nonesuch. In the 2004–05 season, Mr. Ax also contributed to an International Emmy Award-winning BBC documentary commemorating the Holocaust that aired on the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. In 2013, Mr. Ax's recording *Variations* received the Echo Klassik Award for "Solo Recording of the Year" (19th-century music/piano).

Mr. Ax resides in New York City with his wife, pianist Yoko Nozaki. They have two children together, Joseph and Sarah. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and holds honorary doctorates of music from Yale and Columbia Universities. For more information about Mr. Ax's career, please visit www.EmanuelAx.com.

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