



CLEVELAND
CHAMBER
MUSIC
SOCIETY

PROGRAM NOTES

Paul Huang, *violin*; Danbi Um, *violin*; Amy Yang, *piano*

February 21, 2023 – 7:30 p.m.

Disciples Christian Church

Sonata in E minor, Op. 3, No. 5

Jean-Marie Leclair

Born: Lyons, 1697

Died: Paris, 1764

Composed: 1730

A native of Lyons, Jean-Marie Leclair studied in Italy, where he became thoroughly acquainted with the Italian violin tradition represented by Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713). He was one of the first to bring this new style to France and to adapt it to the local taste. He had an international reputation and performed all over Europe, eventually obtaining a post at the French royal court of Louis XV. The circumstances of his death are mysterious: he was apparently murdered by his nephew (also a violinist), but we don't know why, as we also don't know why the murderer was never charged with the crime. (He should be properly referred to as Jean-Marie Leclair Sr., as he had a brother, younger by six years, who, inexplicably, was also called Jean-Marie. Jean-Marie Jr., too, became a violinist and composer, though much less successful than his older brother; he spent his entire career in his hometown of Lyons.)

Jean-Marie Leclair Sr. published twelve collections of instrumental music and one opera during his lifetime (two more single works were printed shortly after his death). Two of these collections, opp. 3 and 12, are sets of six sonatas that have the distinction of being scored for two violins without the usual *basso continuo*. Both violin parts use frequent double and triple stops, creating a full harmony that can dispense with a keyboard accompaniment.

With a single exception, the Op. 3 sonatas are all in three movements, with two fast movements framing an Adagio or a dance. The two violins are treated equally, and usually switch parts whenever a section is repeated. The opening movement of the fifth sonata, in E minor, is rich in figurations traded back and forth between the two players. The middle movement is a graceful Gavotte dance, followed by a virtuosic Presto.

Suite for two violins and piano, Op. 71

Moritz Moszkowski

Born: Breslau, Prussia [now Wrocław, Poland], 1854

Died: Paris, 1925

Composed: 1903

Moritz Moszkowski died in Paris at the age of seventy-one, a sick, impoverished, and nearly forgotten man. Yet in his earlier years, he had been one of the most admired musicians of his generation—a virtuoso pianist and a highly successful composer. He was most famous for his solo piano works which are sometimes dismissed as “salon music” these days, yet they show a level of craftsmanship that made his contemporary Ignacy Jan Paderewski, himself a celebrated pianist-composer, declare that “after Chopin, Moszkowski best understands how to write for the piano.”

Moszkowski also understood how to write for the violin, an instrument he played well enough to be in the orchestra of the Stern Conservatory in Berlin, where he studied and later taught for more than

twenty-five years. In this suite for two violins, Moszkowski staged a friendly competition between two soloists, while also giving the piano much more than a simple accompanying role.

The work is in four movements, loosely following the outline of a sonata cycle with two fast pieces, with a scherzo and a slow movement in between. In the opening *Allegro energico*, Moszkowski balances forceful gestures with moments of tender, lyrical singing; the ending is stormy and brilliant. The second movement is a gentle minuet in which two thematic groups alternate—one in major, the other in minor. The slow movement is a “love duet” between the two violins, while the finale is a jaunty tarantella with a calmer middle section and a virtuosic final flourish.

Sonata for two violins, Op. posth.

Eugène Ysaÿe

Born: Liège, Belgium, 1858

Died: Brussels, 1931

Composed: 1915

Eugène Ysaÿe is remembered, first and foremost, as perhaps the greatest violinist of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He was a highly influential teacher and the dedicatee of such classics of string literature as César Franck’s Sonata, Ernest Chausson’s *Poème* and Claude Debussy’s String Quartet. Of his compositions, the six great sonatas for unaccompanied violin are part of the standard repertoire, but the rest of his voluminous output is heard much less

frequently.

The present sonata, written in London in 1915, was dedicated to Queen Elizabeth of Belgium, who had been one of Ysaÿe’s violin students. The extremely ambitious, half-hour work was not published until 1967; since then, it has been adopted by violinists as a welcome addition to the violin-duo literature.

The three movements follow a classical outline of fast (with slow

introduction)—slow—fast), but each movement is sub-divided into multiple sections, with many changes of key and tempo. There are clear echoes of Baroque music, most obviously in the fugue that appears in the central portion of the first movement. For the most part, however, Ysaÿe employed a late Romantic idiom saturated with chromatic half-steps.

Afterword

Chris Rogerson

Born: Amherst, NY, 1988

Composed: 2020

Chris Rogerson is enjoying a growing reputation as a composer, with increasingly frequent performances in major venues by pre-eminent performers. *Afterword* was premiered at the Barns at Wolf Trap by Danbi Um, Paul Huang, and Orion Weiss in February 2020. Currently a faculty member at the Curtis Institute of Music, Rogerson has offered the following comments on his piece:

There is something noble, sweeping, and grand about looking back on life, reflecting on life's triumphs, pains, joys, and mysteries. I composed this piece after Jessye Norman's death, and listened to her sublime recording of Strauss's autumnal *Four Last Songs* frequently. Strauss perfectly captures

Through the almost constant use of double and triple stops, he often creates the impression that we are listening to a string quartet rather than just two violins. In the last movement, Ysaÿe adds harmonics and several other new techniques to a violinistic arsenal that is already quite extensive, and ends the sonata with a vigorous coda.

this feeling of contemplation, especially in the final song "Im Abendrot." In *Afterword*, I make subtle references to this song.

I also composed that piece after reading Hanya Yanagihara's novel *A Little Life*, which is at its core a meditation on life's sweetness and anguish. Without spoiling the novel, one of the characters experiences unimaginable pain. To me there is something particularly poignant about someone who reflects on a difficult life: the shortness of it, how cruel it can be, how ephemeral, how sweet.

Afterword is dedicated to my great friend Jacob.

Hebraique Elegie

Amy Barlowe

Born: Copiague, NY, 1952

Composed: 2001

Violinist-composer Amy Barlowe has long been part of the violin duo [AB]² with her husband Alan Bodman. One of many works she has composed for the duo is *Hebraique Elegie*, paying tribute to Barlowe's father,

who passed away in 2000. The composer has written:

There is something about the history of the Jewish people, their struggle for

survival, their innate ability to buoy themselves from the depths of tragedy through the use of humor, that has always fascinated me. The *Hebraique Elegie* was born of the desire to find a home for the emotions I experienced at the passing of my father. The hypnotic dance at its core is a sweet reminiscence of dancing with my father at Bar

Mitzvahs, while a very little girl, first with my feet atop his polished black shoes; then on my own. From the lonely, chant-like cadenza at its opening, to reflection and reluctant acceptance at its close, the *Hebraique Elegie* is a lament expressing the irony and juxtaposition of joy and suffering; the struggle with the inevitable.

Navarra, Op. 33

Pablo de Sarasate

Born: Pamplona, Spain, 1844

Died: Biarritz, France, 1908

Composed: 1889

The great Spanish-Basque violinist and composer, Pablo Martín Melitón de Sarasate y Navascués, was born in the northern province of Navarra, and he paid tribute to his native region in the only piece he composed for not one but two violins. This virtuoso fantasy on the *jota* dance is an extraordinary tour de force in that the two violinists must sound like a single instrument, a kind of super-violin. They

play together all the time, mostly in parallel thirds or complementary chords. One hears duets of extremely tricky harmonics, fast runs and *pizzicati* (plucked strings), all played simultaneously by the two players who have to be perfectly coordinated. The identity of the second violinist who played this work with Sarasate is presently unknown; it is left for future musical sleuths to discover!

-Peter Laki

Mr. Laki is a musicologist and Visiting Associate Professor of Music at Bard College. He has been the annotator for the Society's program booklet since 2012, having previously served as annotator for the Cleveland Orchestra from 1990 to 2007. He is a native of Budapest and holds a Ph.D. in music from the University of Pennsylvania.