

Program Notes provided by Ms. Pi-Hsien Chen for her recital at Jordan Hall January 27, 2018. (All program except the piece by Mr. Lei Liang. Mr. Liang wrote his own program notes.)

In 1784, two years after his marriage, **Mozart** started compiling a list of his works ("Verzeichnis aller meiner Werke"), recording the date of each piece with an incipit.

He regarded the Quintet for Piano and Wind Instruments KV 452 as "the best work I have composed in this year". After encountering the music of Christoph Willibald Gluck, Mozart was inspired to write variations based on a theme by Gluck. This was a time in his life when he was quite content. The Piano Concerto KV 456 in B^b major expresses a playful happiness; he wrote this concerto just before the Sonata in C minor **KV 457** included in the program today. This sonata starts dramatically: phrases going up and down with strong contrasts. All repetitions must be observed – the piece is like a long race that cannot be restrained!

The second movement is in E^b major, a key Mozart often uses for peaceful and consoling music. The themes are presented with slight ornamental variations. The restless third movement makes me feel as if I were seeking, questioning, hesitating, and searching in the silence created by the sudden pauses.

Eight months later (during which the piano concertos KV 459 and the famous KV 466 were composed), Mozart composed the Fantasia **KV 475**, which is not only an introduction to the C minor sonata, it tells the whole story of contradictions between hardness and gentleness, doubt and confidence, desperation and hope through its shifting and clearly differentiated moods.

Each one of the **five pieces of Schoenberg's Op. 23** is a character piece; each one tells a little story (during this period – 1920 to 1923 – Schoenberg was also working on his Suite Op. 25).

The pieces are:

1. Sehr Langsam - Very Slow
2. Sehr Rasch - Very Fast
3. Langsam - Slow
4. Schwungvoll - Lively
5. Walzer - Waltz

Schoenberg was an autodidact, who oriented himself first to Brahms and also made music in Viennese salons with the violinist Fritz Kreisler and other friends.

Expression was of the utmost importance to Schoenberg. He taught his students always to take seriously their own sense of expression, just as he did. We can recognize the style of the self-portraits he painted of himself in the Viennese spirit of the time. The technique of using twelve tones was a necessity for the precise expression of his meaning. The fifth piece, "Walzer", is the first instance where he used a twelve-tone row.

In the fifties, Pierre **Boulez** wrote, "Schoenberg is dead!" What did he mean? He was indicating that composers were already searching for new compositional procedures beyond Schoenberg's ideas. In Darmstadt in 1949, Olivier Messiaen had demonstrated the serial organization of pitches, durations, dynamics, and articulations in his piano etude "Mode de valeurs et d'intensités". John Cage was also already engaged with the Chinese I-Ching and seriously influencing young composers with his ideas. Cage gave Joyce's *Ulysses* to Boulez: their profound friendship is documented in their letters.

Boulez found relationships between Chinese philosophy and the poems of the French writer Stéphane Mallarmé, particularly (*Un coup de dés*) . Five movements were planned for Boulez's Third Sonata (1955-1956), but only the second and third "Formants" (as he called the movements) were finished and published.

The idea was to create a piece without fixing its beginning and end: to give players the chance to make decisions themselves.

The order of the four pieces within the second Formant, TROPE, can be chosen by the pianist. The third Formant, MIROIR, is notated like a painting on one large sheet of paper. The music is notated using green and red patterns: green is for individual pitches, red is for chords. Special sounds are created by depressing the piano keys silently and suspending their dampers through the use of the middle *sostenuto* pedal. These strings are then made to sound through vibrations produced when other keys are played normally. In MIROIR, different combinations of the indicated musical patterns are possible.

Franz **Schubert** composed his Sonata D 568, along with drafts for other pieces, in June of 1817. For a brief period of nine months, he lived with his friend Franz von Schober, where he was unusually untroubled, without money worries, and not burdened with school duties for his father. Months before, he had set several Goethe poems ("Heidenröslein", "Wanderers Nachtlied", and the "Erkönig") and sent them to the famous poet, who returned the songs without comment. The E^b major Sonata was originally written in D^b major, but Schubert transposed the entire Sonata up into E^b after the publisher told him a piece with so many accidentals would be difficult to sell.

Schubert knew that composing was his calling and that he must hurry to dedicate himself to his task – he was aware that his time was limited. Wandering was a constant motif, going from one place to another; even with friends he was lonely – there always had to be a farewell. In a letter to Leopold Kupelwieser, Schubert wrote in 1824, "... in a word, I feel I am the most unlucky, miserable person in the world ... think of someone whose health will never be right again ... who out of despair over the situation always makes things worse instead of better ... whose shining hopes have come to nothing, to whom the happiness of love and friendship offers nothing more than pain"