

Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, *violin*

Anne-Marie McDermott, *piano*

Friday, March 4, 2005, 8 pm

Zellerbach Hall

PROGRAM

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart | Sonata for Violin and Piano
in B-flat major, K. 454
Largo — Allegro
Andante
Allegretto |
| Francis Poulenc | Sonata for Violin and Piano (1943)
Allegro con fuoco
Intermezzo: Très lent et calme
Presto tragico |

INTERMISSION

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| Johannes Brahms | Sonata No. 3 for Violin and Piano
in D minor, Op. 108
Allegro
Adagio
Un poco presto e con sentimento
Presto agitato |
|-----------------|--|

Ms. Salerno-Sonnenberg has recorded for Nonesuch; Angell/EMI.

Ms. McDermott has recorded for GMN and Arabesque.

Cal Performances gratefully acknowledges The Shenson Foundation for its generous support of our 2004/05 Recital Series.

Cal Performances thanks the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The Wallace Foundation, and the Zellerbach Family Foundation for their generous support.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg (*violin*) is celebrated worldwide as one of the most original and fearless artists on the concert stage today. Renowned for her electrifying performances, passionate interpretations and musical depth, she is sought after by today's greatest conductors and orchestras, as well as by fellow artists for collaborations in both classical and other genres.

Ms. Salerno-Sonnenberg splits her focus for 2004-05 between orchestral and collaborative performances. Her appearances this season included some of the most prestigious music festivals in the United States, including Ravinia, Aspen and the Cabrillo Festival, and orchestral engagements across the US, including the Seattle Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, Colorado Symphony, St. Louis Symphony, San Diego Symphony and the Columbus Symphony. Her collaborations with fellow musicians featured pianist Anne-Marie McDermott in recital; jazz violinist Regina Carter and Celtic violinist Eileen Ivers (in two performances with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra and one with the Green Bay Symphony Orchestra in February 2005 of Chris Brubeck's *Fiddler's Three – Interplay*, a contemporary work

for three violins and orchestra written especially for the three musicians); and a spring 2005 tour with duo guitarists Sérgio and Odair Assad. Internationally, Ms. Salerno-Sonnenberg traveled to Brazil in December 2004 to perform with the Assads in orchestral concerts with the Orquestra Sinfonica do Estado de São Paulo as well as in chamber music, and she traveled to England in January 2005 to perform with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic.

An engaging communicator whose sense of humor and naturalness in front of the camera have not gone unnoticed, Ms. Salerno-Sonnenberg has been featured on a variety of television programs, not only as a guest on talk shows, but as a host and featured actress/musician. She has appeared in a cameo on ABC's prime time comedy *Dharma & Greg* (2001); in a special segment on PBS' Children's Television Workshop's award-winning program *Sesame Street*; and as the subject of a 2000 Academy Award-nominated documentary film on her life, *Speaking In Strings* (which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival). Released in theaters nationwide during the summer of 1999, and subsequently premiered on HBO's Signatures channel in December 1999, *Speaking In Strings* is available on VHS and DVD by New Video. She has hosted PBS' *Backstage/Live from Lincoln Center* and been featured in a commercial for Signet Bank. Her guest appearances are numerous, and include CBS' *60 Minutes*, *60 Minutes II*, and *Sunday Morning*; CNN's *Newsstand*; NBC's *National News* and *The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson* (several times); A & E's *Artist of the Week with Elliot Forrest*; Bravo's *Arts & Minds* and *The Art of Influence*; PBS' *Live from Lincoln Center*, *The Charlie Rose Show*, and *City Arts*, as well as the PBS/BBC series *The Mind*. In 1989, Crown Books published *Nadja: On My Way*, an autobiography written for children in which she shares her experiences as a young musician building a career. In 1999, Ms. Salerno-Sonnenberg was featured in a book on celebrities entitled *The Virtuoso*.

Ms. Salerno-Sonnenberg's versatility and vast range of interpretive skills are further demonstrated in the recording field, where she is considered a groundbreaker. With over 20 recordings to her credit, her current CDs are on

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

the Nonesuch and Angel/EMI Classics labels. In addition to standard classical repertoire, including Barber, Brahms, Bruch, Chausson, Debussy, Mendelssohn, Paganini, Shostakovich, Vivaldi, and Wolf (all recorded for EMI Classics), Ms. Salerno-Sonnenberg has received critical acclaim for several “crossover” discs as well: a self-titled recording of gypsy music from Eastern Europe with the duo guitarists the Assads (Nonesuch 2000); *Humoresque* (Nonesuch 1998), a CD of music from the 1947 film *Humoresque* that combines classical works and pop standards, which the *New York Times* has called “a valuable historical document”; and *It Ain't Necessarily So* (Angel/EMI 1995) which includes works by Gershwin, Kreisler, and Scott Joplin, among others. Included among her recordings is *Speaking In Strings* (Angel/EMI 1999) comprised of music from the Counterpoint Film's documentary on Ms. Salerno-Sonnenberg of the same title. An admirer of all musical genres, she has made guest appearances on recordings by Mandy Patinkin, Joe Jackson and Keith Jarrett, and has also collaborated with such artists as Judy Blazer, Roger Kellaway, Bob James, Regina Carter, Eileen Ivers and Janis Siegel. Ms. Salerno-Sonnenberg has been working on several new recordings, including a live recording made at New York's Merkin Hall in April 2004 with pianist Anne-Marie McDermott, and a recording of Mark O'Connor's *Concerto for Two Violins* with the violinist/composer on the OMAC label, to be released in the 2004-05 season. Scheduled for next season are recordings of Tchaikovsky's *Violin Concerto in D, Op. 35*, and the world premiere recordings of Clarice Assad's *Violin Concerto* and *Concerto Origins* by Sérgio Assad.

Ms. Salerno-Sonnenberg's professional career began in 1981 when she won the Walter W. Naumburg International Violin Competition. In 1983 she was recognized with an Avery Fisher Career Grant, and in 1988 was Ovarions Debut Recording Artist of the Year. In 1999 she was honored with the prestigious Avery Fisher Prize, awarded to instrumentalists who have demonstrated “outstanding achievement and excellence in music.” In May of that same year, Ms. Salerno-Sonnenberg was awarded an honorary Masters of Musical Arts from the New Mexico State University, the first

honorary degree the University has ever awarded. An American citizen, Ms. Salerno-Sonnenberg was born in Rome and emigrated to the United States at the age of eight to study at The Curtis Institute of Music. She later studied with Dorothy DeLay at The Juilliard School.



Anne-Marie McDermott (*piano*) is a luminous, boldly emotive pianist who conveys great sensitivity and spirituality through her playing, because of this she is widely celebrated for her performances on the world's most illustrious stages. A versatile musician, Ms. McDermott is at home with a wide range of repertoire, from Bach and Mozart to Prokofiev and Rachmaninov. As a solo recitalist, soloist with orchestra or as part of a chamber music ensemble, she conveys the message of the composer in deeply felt, spontaneous playing. During the 2004-05 season Ms. McDermott will appear with the Houston Symphony, the New Jersey Symphony and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, among other ensembles, and continue her association with violinist Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, and with the

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, of which she is an artist member. Highlights of recent seasons include performances with the Guarneri String Quartet at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and performances with the Indianapolis Symphony and the Nashville Symphony.

A passionate champion of the music of Prokofiev, Ms. McDermott performed the complete cycle of sonatas at the Lincoln Center Festival in July 2003. She also performed the cycle at the University of Arizona in February (including a master class, panel discussion and outreach event), at Chamber Music Northwest in Portland in March (complete piano sonatas plus chamber music works), and at UCLA's Schoenberg Hall in May (complete sonatas). She recorded the complete cycle of sonatas and chamber works for Arabesque Recordings, which released the first three volumes in July 2003. The remaining volumes will be released between 2004 and 2006. In 2001 she released a critically praised all-Bach recording on the GMN label.

Ms. McDermott debuted with the New York Philharmonic in 1997 under Christian Thielemann and has since appeared with the orchestras of Atlanta, Baltimore, Dallas, Pittsburgh, St. Louis and Seattle. During the 1999-2000 season she toured the US with the Australian Chamber Orchestra. Other notable engagements include the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the Brandenburg Ensemble at the Kennedy Center, the Moscow Virtuosi with Vladimir Spivakov at Boston's Symphony Hall and New York's Avery Fisher Hall, and the New York Pops at Carnegie Hall. Her recital engagements

have included New York's 92nd Street Y and Alice Tully Hall, the Kennedy Center and San Francisco's Herbst Theatre. She has participated in such festivals as Mostly Mozart, Ravinia, Aspen, Bravo, Vail Valley, Santa Fe, Spoleto, Chamber Music Northwest, Newport, the Dubrovnik Festival in the former Yugoslavia, and the Festival Casals in Puerto Rico.

In 1992 Ms. McDermott stepped in as soloist with the Atlanta Symphony to play the Mozart Concerto K. 466 for an indisposed Murray Perahia. Her performance of this concerto the previous year, with the Osaka Philharmonic Orchestra, had won her the silver medal in Japan's First Hamamatsu Piano Competition. In 1995 she returned to Japan for her debut recital tour.

A winner of the Young Concert Artists Auditions, Ms. McDermott was also the recipient of the Avery Fisher Career Development Award, the Andrew Wolf Memorial Chamber Music Award, the Joseph Kalichstein Piano Prize, the Paul A. Fish Memorial Prize, the Bruce Hungerford Memorial Prize, and the Mortimer Levitt Career Development Award for Women Artists.

Ms. McDermott began playing the piano at age 5. By 12 she had performed the Mendelssohn Concerto in G minor with the National Orchestral Association at Carnegie Hall. She studied at the Manhattan School of Music as a scholarship student with Dalmo Carra, Constance Keene and John Browning, and participated in master classes with such highly respected artists as Leon Fleisher, Menahem Pressler, Misha Dichter, Abbey Simon, Rosalyn Tureck, Michael Tilson Thomas and Mstislav Rostropovich.

**Sonata for Violin and Piano in B-flat major,
K. 454**

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)
Composed in 1784.**

**Premiered April 29, 1784 in Vienna by the
composer and violinist Regina Strinasacchi.**

One of the most astonishing aspects of Mozart's profligate genius was his method of composition — with only a few exceptions, such as the richly contrapuntal “Haydn” Quartets, he would compose a work complete to the last detail in his head and only then commit it to paper, without revision or correction, like some sort of divine dictation. There are not infrequent reports of his accomplishing this clerical task during a game of billiards or while imbibing a flask of *Heurigen* up in Grinzing. This phenomenal ability to produce fully formed works with a single creative stroke is demonstrated nowhere better than in the genesis of the B-flat Violin Sonata of 1784.

On April 24, 1784 Mozart reported from Vienna to Papa Leopold in Salzburg: “We now have here the famous Strinasacchi from Mantua, a very good violinist. She has a great deal of taste and feeling in her playing. I am composing a Sonata which we are going to play together at her concert in the [court] theater.” Regina Strinasacchi, a brilliant violin and guitar player (Niccolò Paganini was also a dual virtuoso on those same instruments), had just turned 20, and was busily touring Europe after completing her education at the school where Antonio Vivaldi spent his teaching career, the *Ospedale della Pietà* in Venice. Mozart, aware that the Emperor Joseph himself would be at Strinasacchi's concert, arranged to perform with her, and offered a new composition as the subject of their collaboration. Because of the press of his activities, or perhaps for some other reason (Denis Stevens suggested that it was to keep the royal eye from resting too fixedly upon the young lady from Mantua while he was ignored), Mozart finished the Sonata only to the extent of writing out the violin part and providing himself with a few hasty scribbles to serve as the piano score. This situation gave the appearance that Mozart was improvising the piano part on the spot. Joseph sent an emissary to the stage after the performance to inquire if this

was so, and Mozart displayed the nearly empty piano pages to the amazed Emperor, not bothering to tell him that the piece existed in a completed state in his mind, and that his finished scores were simply to record his music for others and to be sold to publishers. The story is confirmed by the manuscript, into which the piano part was squeezed to fit the existing violin line.

Alfred Einstein wrote that the Largo that begins the B-flat Sonata is like a proud triumphal arch through which the listener approaches the principal part of the movement. The equality of violin and piano as well as the work's generating elements of counterpoise and dialogue are apparent right from these opening measures. The Allegro, in sonata form, uses a unison scalar figure as its main theme, a rocketing fanfare motive from the violin as its complementary melody, and a perky, dotted rhythm tune of *opera buffa* jocularly as its closing subject. Of the Andante, a lyrical but richly decorated song, Einstein said that he “[could not] imagine any slow movement in which feeling and *concertante* brilliance could be more completely fused.” The finale is a quicksilver rondo built on a playfully sinuous theme.

**Sonata for Violin and Piano
Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)**

Composed in 1942-1943, revised in 1949.

**Premiered on June 21, 1943 in Paris by violinist
Ginette Neveu and the composer.**

Poulenc established the foundation for his lifetime's music early in his career. “I seek a musical style,” he wrote, “that is healthy, clear and robust, a style as plainly French as Stravinsky's is Slavic.” In forming the elements of his creative language, Poulenc was a pronounced eclectic, freely borrowing from the whole range of French composers active around the turn of the 20th century: Fauré, Ravel, Koechlin, Stravinsky, Roussel and especially Debussy, Satie and Chabrier. The resulting concoction was, however, distinctly that of Poulenc, so much so that the American composer and devoted Francophile Ned Rorem could write, “He is among the magic few. Without his art, my world would weigh less.” Poulenc's technical strength was melody, and it is not coincidental that he was one of the greatest

PROGRAM NOTES

song writers of the 20th century. Though rooted in the traditional harmonic system, his melodies are peppered with frequent, surprisingly piquant dissonances and unexpected turns of rhythmic phrase. Roger Nichols assessed, “For him the most important element of all was melody, and he found his way to a vast treasury of undiscovered tunes within an area that had, according to the most up-to-date musical maps, been surveyed, worked and exhausted.” By the 1940s, the time of the Violin Sonata, Poulenc had developed two distinct melodic styles. One was a straightforward, tuneful type based on what he called “Parisian folklore” — the ditties of such popular entertainers as street musicians, music hall performers and circus bands. The other was a deeply felt lyrical style, most evident in his religious works and the masterful opera *Dialogues of the Carmelites*. Both melodic genres are heard in the Violin Sonata.

Poulenc wrote and destroyed two violin and piano sonatas before publishing his only extant specimen of the form in 1944. The work was begun at his country retreat in Noizay, a tiny village in the Loire Valley, in the summer of 1942, and completed there on Easter Sunday 1943; Poulenc premiered it at the Salle Gaveau in Paris on June 21, 1943 with violinist Ginette Neveu at a benefit concert for writers and musicians imprisoned during the war. Perhaps inevitably, the time of its creation and the circumstance of its first performance colored the Sonata with more than Poulenc’s customary quotient of melancholy. The score was dedicated to the celebrated poet and playwright Federico García Lorca, who was killed in 1936 at the age of 38 at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. Poulenc greatly admired Lorca and his writing, and, in addition to dedicating this Sonata to his memory, set three of his poems, in French translations, in 1947. The association of the Sonata with the poet’s death also accounts for the title of the finale — “Presto tragico” — and the quotation from Lorca that Poulenc placed at the head of the second movement: “The guitar makes dreams cry,” an allusion to Lorca performing Spanish folk songs while accompanying himself on the guitar.

Slashing violin chords introduce the opening movement’s jaunty main theme, for which

the piano provides a chattering, stubbornly independent accompaniment. The music quiets for the lyrical second theme, a sad, Slavic-sounding plaint such as Tchaikovsky might have conceived during one of his Parisian visits. The main theme is then developed with considerable intensity. A pause and a jagged transition lead to a poignant, bittersweet song in the violin, after which the main and second themes are given a condensed and subdued recapitulation. Poulenc said that the second movement was a “vaguely Spanish Andante cantilena.” This introspective and dreamy Intermezzo, with the violin arching above tolling-bell chords in the keyboard, sounds like a vision of Spain that the composer might have conjured over a third glass of amontillado in a Parisian café. The finale, Presto tragico, is in two starkly contrasted sections. The opening part is built around a bustling theme rooted in Poulenc’s familiar Parisian folklore idiom. The closing section, however, which follows after an abrupt break in the music, speaks of tragedy, with mournful sighing phrases from the violin and a sad, halting accompaniment in the piano. The Sonata ends with a few bleak, isolated, stabbing gestures.

Sonata No. 3 for Violin and Piano in D minor, Op. 108

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Composed in 1886-1888.

Premiered December 22, 1888 in Cologne, with Jenö Hubay as violinist and the composer as pianist.

For many years, Brahms followed the sensible practice of the Viennese gentry by abandoning the city when the weather got hot. He spent many happy summers in the hills and lakes of the Salzkammergut, east of Salzburg, but in 1886 his friend Joseph Widmann, a poet and librettist of considerable distinction, convinced Brahms to join him in the ancient Swiss town of Thun, 25 kilometers south of Bern in the foothills of the Bernese Alps. Brahms rented a flower-laden villa on the shore of Lake Thun in the nearby hamlet of Hofstetten, and settled in for a long, comfortable summer. The periods away from Vienna were not merely times of relaxation for Brahms, however,

PROGRAM NOTES

but were actually working holidays. Some of his greatest scores (the Violin Concerto; the Second, Third and Fourth Symphonies; the Piano Concerto No. 2; the *Haydn Variations*; the *Tragic Overture*; and numerous smaller works) had been largely realized at his various summer retreats in earlier years. The three summers that he spent at Thun (1886-1888) were equally productive: the Violin Sonatas Nos. 2 and 3, the C minor Piano Trio, the Second Cello Sonata, the *Gypsy Songs*, the Choral Songs (Op. 104), the Lieder of Op. 105-107 and the Double Concerto were all written there. Brahms began the Third Violin Sonata, Op. 108, at Hofstetten during the summer of 1886, but composed most of the score during his sojourn two years later. The Sonata's premiere was given on December 22, 1888 in Cologne by the composer and the celebrated Hungarian violinist, composer and pedagogue Jenő Hubay.

Brahms' three violin sonatas are works of his fullest maturity. In 1853 he had written a scherzo for a collaborative sonata (Schumann and Albert Dietrich chipped in with the other movements) for Joseph Joachim, but during the following 27 years, he began and destroyed four further attempts in the genre. (Brahms was almost pathologically secretive about his sketches and unfinished works, virtually all of which he destroyed.) It was not until the G major Sonata, Op. 78, of 1880 that he was pleased enough with any of these violinistic progeny to admit one into the world; the Op. 100 Sonata followed in 1886 and Op. 108 came two years later. His reasons for concentrating on this form at the time may have been personal as well as musical — as each of these works was finished, he sent it as a sort of peace offering to Joseph Joachim, from whom he had been estranged for some time. Brahms, it seems, had sided with Joachim's wife, the mezzo-soprano Amalie Weiss, in the couple's divorce proceedings, and bitter feelings were incited between the old friends, though Joachim never wavered in his support and performance of Brahms' music. The rift was not fully healed until Brahms offered Joachim the Double Concerto in 1887.

The D minor Violin Sonata was dedicated to Hans von Bülow, a musician of gargantuan talent celebrated as both pianist and conductor, who played Brahms' compositions widely and made them a mainstay in the repertory of the superb court orchestra at Meiningen during his tenure there as music director from 1880 to 1885. The dedication to the pianist-conductor is especially appropriate for this Sonata, since the piano is more thoroughly integrated with the violin than in the earlier two sonatas, in which the keyboard serves largely as accompanist to the string instrument's wordless songs. Violin and piano share equally the thematic material of the opening movement: the violin presents the principal subject, a lyrical inspiration marked by long notes that give way to quick neighboring tones; the piano's arching second theme is superbly constructed from a two-measure motive of step-wise motion followed by a hesitant dotted-rhythm gesture. The development section is largely occupied with a discussion of the main theme. A full recapitulation and an ethereal coda grown from the main theme close the movement.

The Adagio is one of Brahms' most endearing creations, an instrumental hymn of delicately dappled emotions, touching melody and suave harmonies that caused Peter Latham to note in his biography of the composer, "Brahms wrote nothing more gracious than these Sonatas, in which he never seeks grandeur and woos rather than compels." The third movement (which the score instructs should be played "*con sentimento*") replaces the traditional scherzo with an intermezzo of precisely controlled intensity and masterful motivic development. The sonata-form finale resumes the darkly expressive eloquence of the opening movement with its impetuous main theme. A chordal subject initiated by the piano provides contrast, but the unsettled mood of the first theme remains dominant through the remainder of the movement. "Perfect as each movement of the three Violin Sonatas is," wrote Karl Geiringer, "they seem, in this last movement, to have reached their culminating point."

—©2005 Dr. Richard E. Rodda