

As a concerto soloist, McCabe has played with many North American orchestras, including the Seattle Symphony, and the Pittsburgh, Oregon, and Victoria symphonies. A frequent soloist with the Corvallis-OSU Symphony, she recently performed Beethoven's 5th Concerto, Ravel's G Major Concerto, and Beethoven's 4th Concerto.

McCabe has appeared in many summer festivals, including the Victoria International Festival, The Highlands Festival in North Carolina, Chamber Music Northwest, and the Chintimini Chamber Music Festival. As Artist in Residence at LaSalle School of the Arts in Singapore, she was named an affiliate artist of the school. An engaging lecturer, her seminars for teachers and students are in-depth explorations into the matters of performance and the musical worlds of composers, including Bach, Mozart, Debussy, and Bartok. As a performer of these styles, the Atlanta Constitution noted that "McCabe's reading of Bartok's 'Improvisations' displayed a true affinity for the eclectic Bartokian style and Debussy's 'Estampes' was a model of limpid understatement, always delivered with taste."

At Oregon State University, McCabe directs the piano program and teaches courses in the music history sequence for undergraduate majors. Based on outstanding teaching, she was named a Master Teacher in the College of Liberal Arts, and has taught interdisciplinary courses linking music with philosophy, sociology and English.

She earned her doctorate from the University of Michigan, where she studied with Theodore Lettvin and Gyorgy Sandor; her master's degree from the Juilliard School, where she studied with Ania Dorfmann; and her bachelor's degree from the University of Washington, where she studied with Bela Siki.

CLASSICAL

KING FM 98.1

School of Music

University of Washington Seattle, Washington

*Presents a Faculty and Guest Artist Recital:*

*Sister Act:  
McCabe x 2*

*with*

Robin & Rachelle McCabe,  
*duo pianos*

7:30 PM  
January 23, 2007  
MEANY THEATER

## PROGRAM

CD 15,316

- 1 SONATA IN B<sup>b</sup> MAJOR, K. 358 ..... 12:47 ..... W. A. MOZART  
*Allegro* (1756-1791)  
*Adagio*  
*Molto Presto*

- 2 VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY HAYDN, ..... 19:14 ..... JOHANNES BRAHMS  
*Opus 56b* (1833-1897)

## INTERMISSION

- 3 from "Fantaisie-tableaux," Opus 5 8:11  
 BARCAROLLE ..... SERGEI RACHMANINOFF  
 (1873-1943)

- 4 SCARAMOUCHE ("Suite pour Deux Pianos") ..... 9:29 ..... DARIUS MILHAUD  
*Vif* (1892-1974)  
*Modere*  
*Brazileira*

- 5 AN AMERICAN IN PARIS ..... 18:01 ..... GEORGE GERSHWIN  
 (1898-1937)

- 6 encore 2:51  
 Bless You Is My Woman Now — Gershwin,  
 Arr. Percy Grainger

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART, whose 250<sup>th</sup> birthday was recently celebrated by his worldwide fan base, achieved the status of a modern pop celebrity with the 1984 release of *Amadeus*. The film's portrayal of the composer was both fanciful and romantic: Mozart was neither murdered nor hounded to his death, nor was he the impossibly giddy caricature portrayed in the movie. In actuality, the infamous "pauper's grave" reflected Enlightenment reforms decreed by Emperor Joseph II, a sometime patron of Mozart.

A Hollywood scriptwriter could scarcely embellish upon the legendary prodigious talent that remains the measure of musical ability. As a child prodigy, Mozart astonished the crowned heads and courts of Europe, and his precocious skills in transcription, composition, and keyboard performance provoked investigative examinations by a fellow of the Royal Society in England and by church authorities in Austria and Italy.

Accompanying Mozart on his earliest tours were his father, Leopold, and his fellow performer and beloved sister, Maria Anna Mozart (1751-1829), known as "Nannerl." Nannerl formed the other half of the *wunderkind* brother-and-sister act, and reportedly, her gifts were nearly equal to or as great as those of her brother. The children performed duets on double-manual harpsichords, and Wolfgang was equally facile playing violin in duet with Nannerl's keyboard.

Nannerl was, however, unable to follow the same path as Wolfgang, who matured into a professional performer and respected composer. At around 18 years old, she was compelled by her father and by the social conventions of the time to abandon a career that was thought unsuitable for a young woman of marriageable age.

Although Wolfgang encouraged his sister's efforts at composition, nothing by Nannerl is known to be extant. However, in 1773 or 1774 Wolfgang composed the *Sonata in B-flat Major, K. 358*, for their performing duo, and the two may have collaborated on the composition to some extent. Though likely performed by the Mozarts on a pair of harpsichords rather than on the fortepiano, K. 358, "The Four-Hand Sonata," has become a celebrated piece in the piano repertoire.

Living in the era of German Romanticism that so exalted individual expression and was intoxicated by ecstatic visions of music's transcendental realm—in short, in the era of rampant Wagnerism—JOHANNES BRAHMS extolled the practical virtues of good craftsmanship. Moreover, rather than trusting inspiration to arrive in a blinding flash, ignited by the divine spark, Brahms assiduously studied and cultivated traditional forms that he inherited from his revered musical forbearers. Indeed, Brahms was so overawed by Beethoven's legacy that he was reticent to tackle the symphonic form, and put off doing so until relatively late in his career. Brahms's *Variations on a Theme by Haydn* represents a pivotal work whose critical and popular success emboldened the forty-year old composer to complete his first symphony.

Baroque composers bequeathed the theme and variations form and related techniques to later generations of composers. Haydn made extensive use of the form, and Beethoven had an abiding interest in writing theme and variations. Brahms esteemed the "old form" as a sturdy framework in which a composer can spin out any number of melodic, harmonic and rhythmic ideas from the basic material of a simple theme.

In 1873, Brahms brought his work in progress to Clara Wieck Schumann (1819–1896), a fellow composer and piano virtuoso, widow of composer Robert Schumann, and Brahms's closest friend. The two pianists played through the score, and encouraged by Clara Schumann, Brahms published his *Variations*. Some two months after his session with Schumann, he scored an orchestral version of the piece (Op. 56b).

Brahms's work unfolds from an opening statement of the principal theme in B-flat major, followed by eight variations that build to a magnificent finale: a passacaglia, representing another legacy of the Baroque. The passacaglia in itself is a smaller-scale set of variations based on a repeated bass pattern that is, in this case, derived from the piece's opening principal theme.

The principal theme of the work, believed by Brahms to have originated with Joseph Haydn, is more likely to have been written by one of Haydn's students. Hence, some contemporary sources prefer to re-title the piece according to the name of its second, "St. Anthony's Chorale."

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In addition to being a world-famous concert performer, his name being nearly synonymous with "piano virtuoso," SERGEI RACHMANINOFF also enjoyed a brilliant career as a composer and conductor. Moreover, after immigrating to the United States from his native Russia in 1919, Sergei Rachmaninoff became an early star of classical recording, cutting discs and piano rolls for Thomas Edison and the Victor Talking Machine Company. His *Prelude in C-Sharp Minor*, written when he was just 19, scored the equivalent of a Top-40 hit and has remained a beloved standard in the concert hall.

Undoubtedly, Rachmaninoff's enduring appeal is owing to his melodic gifts, and he shared his penchant for soaring, passionate sounding melody with the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian composers whom he studied and admired. Above all, he esteemed Tchaikovsky, another great melodicist, who encouraged young Sergei's early efforts at composition, and to whom Rachmaninoff dedicated his first piano suite, the *Fantaisie tableaux* (Suite No. 1, 1893).

Tonight we hear a performance of the first movement of the four-movement suite for two pianos, the *Barcarolle, allegretto*. In the 19<sup>th</sup>-century tradition, the barcarolle is associated with the songs of Venetian gondoliers. Among others, Chopin and Mendelssohn composed in this Romantic genre, whose characteristic 6/8 or 12/8 meter evokes the motion of a boat on rolling waves.

Rachmaninoff's suite shows additional historical links to the Romantic traditions of the tone poem and programmatic piece. Rachmaninoff affixed an evocative poetic quotation on his score for each movement of the work. The

*Barcarolle* bears the following quotation from *Gondola Song*, by Mikhail Lermontov:

*O cool evening wave  
Lap gently under the oars of the gondola  
...that song again! And again the sound of the guitar!  
...in the distance, now melancholy, now happy,  
Was heard the sound of the old barcarolle.  
"The gondola glides through the water and time flies through love:  
The waters become smooth again and passion will rise no more."*

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DARIUS MILHAUD represents that rare breed of modern composer who, notwithstanding his radical experimentation and unconventional style, has secured a permanent place in the classical repertory.

Reared in Provence, Milhaud attended the Paris Conservatoire, where he added technical facility in composition and orchestration to his proficiency on violin. His rigorous formal training gave him the wherewithal to compose very rapidly, and Milhaud's vast *oeuvre* includes every major genre in the concert hall and operatic traditions.

A self-described "globe-trotter," Milhaud sought out and absorbed musical cultures wherever his travels took him. His uninhibited imagination also guided him to the most unexpected sources of inspiration; Milhaud scored his song cycle *Machines agricoles* (Op. 56, 1919) to texts taken from a farm machinery catalogue. His explorations of polytonality (the sounding of two or more keys simultaneously), chance procedures, and his fusing of classical forms with stylistic borrowings from jazz (*La Création du Monde*, Op. 81, 1923) were pioneering and influential achievements.

Exiled from France during the Nazi occupation, Milhaud taught at Mills College in Oakland, California. Among his students were pianist Dave Brubeck, minimalist composer Steve Reich, and popular songwriter Burt Bacharach. Seattle composer Gloria Swisher and William O. Smith, professor emeritus of the University of Washington School of Music, also studied with Darius Milhaud at Mills.

The suite's namesake originated as a character in the commedia dell'arte, an Italian entertainment dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In that theatrical tradition, *Scaramouche* is the caricature of a soldier, sailor, or servant. In any of those roles, he is a cowardly braggart and a bumbler who manages to escape his botched intrigues by leaving some hapless innocent in the lurch.

Milhaud's *Scaramouche* is a suite in three movements, and was commissioned by one of the work's debut artists, pianist Ida Jankelevitch, for a performance at the 1937 Paris World's Fair. The third movement, *Brazileira*, evokes the samba rhythms that delighted Milhaud during a year's stay in Brazil (1917–1918), an adventure that left an indelible impression on his musical language.

The quintessential American composer was the son of Russian immigrants and grew up the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Quitting high school to begin an apprenticeship in New York's Tin Pan Alley, GEORGE GERSHWIN advanced from being a song plugger for a music publisher to become the leading composer of hit songs, Broadway musicals, and movie soundtracks.

Gershwin's first foray into the concert hall was the groundbreaking *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924), a stylistic synthesis of piano concerto, jazz band, and Latin-inspired dance rhythms. The critical and popular success of *Rhapsody in Blue* encouraged Gershwin's ambitions to write "serious" music in the classical vein. In 1925, he completed the *Concerto in F for piano and orchestra*, and the following year marked the debut of *Preludes for Piano*. (In terms of "jazz," Gershwin gave as good as he got; his songs became "standards," and, along with the blues, now form an essential part of the jazz musician's repertoire.)

In 1928, Gershwin traveled to Paris and Vienna, where he was enthusiastically received by prestigious composers, including Darius Milhaud, Maurice Ravel, and Anton Berg. His European trip inspired *An American in Paris*, Gershwin's symphonic poem and blues-inflected evocation of the Brooklyn-born composer's impressions of the cultural capital of 1920s Europe.

Fulfilling a commission from the New York Philharmonic, Gershwin scored *An American in Paris* for a large symphonic orchestra, augmented by a celesta, saxophone, and a quartet—of taxicab horns, selected and purchased by the composer while in Paris.

Deems Taylor, a music critic and early advocate of Gershwin's compositions for the concert hall, collaborated with the composer on the program notes for the work's Carnegie Hall debut. "You are to imagine," the program requested of the audience, "an American visiting Paris, swinging down the Champs-Élysées on a mild, sunny morning in May or June." Indeed, Robin McCabe hears a "wide-eyed stroll down a boulevard" made audible in the piece's first thematic area. In due course, our American visitor becomes acutely homesick, a mood conveyed by Gershwin's treatment of the blues — the stylistic fingerprint of a composer who studied the Harlem stride piano of James P. Johnson along with his Liszt and Chopin etudes. But the program goes on to reassure us that "nostalgia is not a fatal disease," and in short order the Yankee's upbeat mood is restored by a "noisy, cheerful, self-confident Charleston."

The arrangement for two pianos expresses all the excitement and color of the original orchestral version of the piece, right down to the sound paintings of the taxi blasts. The "riotous finale" concludes what Robin McCabe characterizes as one of the most "rhythmically vivacious scores" in all of Gershwin.

John Hanford, Ph.D.  
Lecturer, University of Washington School of Music

Celebrated American pianist ROBIN MCCABE has enthralled audiences on four continents with her virtuosic performances, and has established herself as one of America's most communicative and persuasive artists. McCabe's involvement and musical sensibilities have delighted audiences across the United States, Europe, Canada, South America, and the Far East.

Critics respond both to McCabe's prowess and to her expressive intensity. As noted by the New York Times, "What Ms. McCabe has that raises her playing to such a special level is a strong lyric instinct and confidence in its ability to reach and touch the listener." She has won numerous prizes and awards, and her recordings have received universal acclaim. Her debut album featured the Agosti transcription of Stravinsky's Firebird Suite, a premiere recording of that piece. Critics praised it as "mightily impressive." Stereo Review described her disc of Bartok as "all that we have come to expect from this artist, a first-rate performance!"

McCabe, a Puyallup native, earned her bachelor of music degree summa cum laude at the University of Washington School of Music, where she studied with Béla Siki, and her master's and doctorate degrees at the Juilliard School of Music, where she studied with Rudolf Firkusny. She joined the Juilliard faculty in 1978, then returned to the UW in 1987 to accept a position on the piano faculty. In 1994 McCabe was appointed Director of the School of Music. She continues to teach as Professor of Piano and head of the school's keyboard division, and is one of two Ruth Sutton Waters Professors of Music for 2002-05. In addition, McCabe is a persuasive arts ambassador and advocate for arts audience development.

The winner of numerous prizes and awards, including the International Concert Artists Guild Competition and a Rockefeller Foundation grant, McCabe was the subject of a lengthy New Yorker magazine profile, "Pianist's Progress," which was later expanded into a book of the same title.

She was honored in 1993 at Seattle's Association for Women in Communications annual Matrix Table dinner, at which outstanding women of achievement in business, the arts, and community service are recognized. In 1995 McCabe presented the annual faculty lecture — a concert with commentary — at the University of Washington. She was the first professor of music in the history of the University to be awarded this lectureship. The November 1997 issue of Seattle magazine selected McCabe as one of 17 current and past University of Washington professors who have had an impact on life in the Pacific Northwest.

RACHELLE MCCABE, concert pianist and professor of music at Oregon State University, enjoys an international career as artist-teacher. She has performed throughout the United States, Canada, Southeast Asia, and England and has played solo recitals in Seattle, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Washington D.C., Atlanta, Detroit, Portland, and Cambridge (UK). McCabe has been heard on NPR's Performance Today, CBC, and PBS television. In chamber music recitals and concerto performances, she has collaborated with some of the world's finest artists.