

FRIDAY, 11-16-90



The
Musical-Poetical Club
(The Fortepiano Society)

M 875
1990
11-16

presents its

Autumn Concert

Friday and Sunday, November 16 and 18, 1990

Brechemin Auditorium
School of Music
University of Washington

DAT # 11,696

CASS # 11,697

Program

Sonata in e minor/E major, Hob. XVI/47 (10:24) Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Adagio — Allegro — Finale: Tempo di Menuet

Tamara Friedman, Anton Walter fortepiano

Three Duets (7:38) Robert Schumann (1810-56)

Herbstlied, Op. 43 No. 2 (August Mahlmann)

Liebesgram, Op. 74 No. 3 (Emanuel Geibel, from the Spanish)

Erste Begegnung, Op. 74 No. 1 (Emanuel Geibel, from the Spanish)

Nancy Williamson, soprano

Cynthia Beitmen, mezzo-soprano

George Bozarth, Nannette Streicher fortepiano

Adagio, Op. posth. 145 No. 1, D. 505 (4:07) Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Tamara Friedman, Streicher fortepiano

Gedichte der Königin Maria Stuart, Op. 135 (10:23) Robert Schumann
(from a collection of old English poems, translated by Gisbert Freiherr Vincke)

Abschied von Frankreich — Nach der Geburt ihres Sohnes
An die Königin Elisabeth — Abschied von der Welt — Gebet

Cynthia Beitmen, mezzo-soprano

George Bozarth, Streicher fortepiano

Konzertstück, Op. 113 (8:16) Felix Mendelssohn (1809-47)

Allegro con fuoco — Andante — Presto

Susan Kohler, early Romantic clarinet

William McColl, basset horn

George Bozarth, Walter fortepiano

Tamara Friedman

About the Instruments

The Classical fortepiano in this concert is a replica of an Anton Walter instrument (Vienna, ca. 1795), built by Rodney Regier of Freeport, Maine, in 1987. This instrument was acquired by the University of Washington with a grant from the Graduate School Research Fund and matching funds from the School of Music and the College of Arts and Sciences. The early Romantic fortepiano is a replica of a Nannette Streicher instrument (Vienna, ca. 1805), built by Kenneth Bakeman of Kirkland, Washington, in 1980.

Susan Kohler's Classical clarinet is a replica of an Amlingue instrument, ca. 1794, made by Timothy Burnett of Boston; the early Romantic clarinet she is playing is by Mollenhauer of Fulda, Germany, ca. 1825. William McColl's Classical clarinet was made by Bühner & Keller of Strasbourg ca. 1795; his basset horn he made himself.

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About Walter and Streicher Fortepianos

By the time Anton Walter and Nannette Streicher built the fortepianos on which Rodney Regier and Kenneth Bakeman modelled the instruments being played in these concerts, Cristofori's invention had undergone nearly a century of modification, much of this in the direction of simplification. The first pianos, made in Florence around 1700, already had a complex system of levers not all that different from the action in the modern piano (although much smaller and lighter-weight). The fortepiano action perfected by the South German builder Johann Andreas Stein in the 1770s, and much admired by Mozart, derives as much from the clavichord as from the harpsichord: the hammer mechanism is mounted directly on the key, creating an action extremely sensitive to variations in touch. After Stein's death in 1792, his daughter Nannette, who was married to the pianist Johann Andreas Streicher, and his son Matthäus Andreas moved the family business to Vienna, joining the migration of piano builders to this capital city of the Hapsburg empire, with its ready market among music-loving aristocrats and bourgeoisie. Henceforth Stein's type of instrument became known as the "Viennese" fortepiano, as opposed to the "English" fortepiano of John Broadwood and others, which used an entirely different type of action that was a direct precursor of the action found in the modern grand piano.

Of performance on Viennese fortepianos, the pianist and composer Johann Nepomuk Hummel wrote (in 1827), "the [Viennese] piano allows the performer to impart to his execution every possible degree of light and shade, speaks clearly and promptly, has a round flutey tone, . . . and does not impede rapidity of execution by requiring too great an effort." In comparison to a modern Steinway, in fact, a

Viennese fortepiano needs only about one-fifth the amount of weight to press down its keys. The depth that the key descends is also much shallower than on a modern piano. The range of the Walter/Regier is five octaves, the Streicher/Bakeman as an extra half octave at the top. The hammers on these pianos are quite small and covered with leather (rather than felt), and their strings are very light gauge. The instruments' upper registers are bright and clear, their middle ranges rich and viola-like, and their basses full, resonant. Yet with so much in common, these two pianos nonetheless sound remarkably different, the Walter being more "Classical," the Streicher more "Romantic."

Anton Walter probably began making pianos of the "Viennese" type in the late 1770s. When Mozart moved from Salzburg to Vienna in 1781 and began composing and performing piano concertos for the Viennese public, it was a fortepiano by Walter that he purchased. In 1790 Walter was appointed "Imperial Royal Court Organ- and Instrument-maker" to the Hapsburg court. By then, as one contemporary writer noted, "among the many fortepiano makers [in Vienna], it is Herr Walter who has become the most famous artist in this trade and who is more or less the foremost builder of this instrument." The replica fortepiano built by Rodney Regier shows the same mastery of construction—both internally and externally—as do the extant Walter originals.

During the first decade of the nineteenth century, Nannette Streicher began to modify the type of piano she built. As a contemporary observer noted, she "abandoned the softness, light touch, and yielding, repercussive tone of the other Viennese instruments and, at Beethoven's wish and with his advice, made instruments with greater resonance and elasticity." The Streicher replica on these concerts is suggestive of the early stages of modification: the touch is still very light, but a significant increase in resonance has been achieved.

To use the Walter/Regier for Haydn and the Streicher/Bakeman for Schubert is natural. The rich middle and lower registers of the Streicher/Bakeman seems sufficiently "Romantic" for the particular Schumann songs and duets on this program. Playing Mendelssohn on a Mozart-period fortepiano leads to a fuller appreciation of this early Romantic's strong roots in the Classical period.

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The Musical-Poetical Club, now in its third year, is a graduate-student organization devoted to fostering the performance of late 18th- and early 19th-century music on period instruments and in authentic styles.

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