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PRESENTS

PETER SERKIN

SOU MUSIC RECITAL HALL

APRIL 20, 2018

7:30 PM

OREGON
CENTER FOR **THE ARTS**
AT SOUTHERN OREGON UNIVERSITY

Peter Serkin Biography

Recognized as an artist of passion and integrity, the distinguished American pianist Peter Serkin has successfully conveyed the essence of five centuries of repertoire. His inspired performances with symphony orchestras, in recital appearances, chamber music collaborations and on recordings have been lauded worldwide for decades.

Peter Serkin's rich musical heritage extends back several generations: his grandfather was violinist and composer Adolf Busch and his father pianist Rudolf Serkin. He has performed with the world's major symphony orchestras, led by such eminent conductors as Seiji Ozawa, Pierre Boulez, Alexander Schneider, Daniel Barenboim, George Szell, Eugene Ormandy, Claudio Abbado, Simon Rattle, James Levine, Herbert Blomstedt, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos and George Cleve. A dedicated chamber musician, Mr. Serkin has collaborated with Alexander Schneider, Pamela Frank, Yo-Yo Ma, the Budapest, Guarneri, Orion, Shanghai, and Dover String Quartets and TASHI, of which he was a founding member.

An avid exponent of the music of many of the 20th and 21st century's most important composers, Mr. Serkin has been instrumental in bringing to life the music of Schoenberg, Reger, Webern, Berg, Stravinsky, Wolpe, Messiaen, Takemitsu, Wuorinen, Goehr, and Knussen for audiences around the world. He has performed many important world premieres of works written specifically for him, in particular by Toru Takemitsu, Hans Werner Henze, Luciano Berio, Leon Kirchner, Alexander Goehr, Oliver Knussen and Charles Wuorinen. Mr. Serkin has recently made several arrangements of four-hand music by Mozart, Schumann and his grandfather, Adolf Busch, for various chamber ensembles and for full orchestra. He has also arranged all of Brahms's organ Chorale-Preludes, transcribed for one piano, four-hands.

Mr. Serkin's 2017-2018 season began with concerts in Japan, and he continues with solo recitals in Ashland OR, Sonoma, Fresno, and Santa Barbara CA, Ridgewood, NJ, and St. Paul, MN, performing Mozart Sonatas paired with Bach's Goldberg Variations. Orchestral engagements include the Bartók Concerto for Two Pianos, Percussion, and Orchestra with Anna Polansky, Orchestra Now, and Leon Botstein at Carnegie Hall. The pianist also performs with the Rogue Valley and Duluth-Superior Symphonies, and he joins the Dover Quartet for the Brahms Piano Quintet at South Mountain Concerts.

Last season, Mr. Serkin performed solo recitals in New York City, Beacon, NY, and Mount Kisco, NY, and orchestral programs with the Sacramento Philharmonic and Berkshire and Longwood Symphonies. In April, he joined members of the New York Philharmonic in a performance of the Busch Piano Quintet at New York City's Merkin Concert Hall at Kaufman Music Center. Following engagements with the Curtis Symphony Orchestra in Philadelphia, Mr. Serkin embarked on a European tour with the orchestra, performing Brahms Piano Concert No. 1 in London, Berlin, Vienna, Salzburg, Dresden, Bremen and Wroclaw.

(continued on page 7)

Peter Serkin Biography continued from page 2

Recent summer seasons have featured engagements at the Ravinia, Tanglewood, La Jolla, Chautauqua, and Music Mountain Music Festivals, BBC Proms, Oxford Philharmonic and Bellingham Music Festivals performing concertos, chamber music, and duo piano programs. Mr. Serkin traveled to Havana, Cuba with the Bard Conservatory Orchestra in June 2016 and has been Artist-in-Residence at the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival.

Orchestral highlights of recent seasons have included the Boston, Chicago, American, Sydney and Saint Louis Symphonies, New York Philharmonic and Scottish Chamber Orchestra, while recital tours have taken Mr. Serkin to Hong Kong, Cologne, Philadelphia, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Santa Monica, Princeton and New York's 92nd Street Y.

Mr. Serkin currently teaches at Bard College Conservatory of Music.

The Oregon Center for the Arts Box Office Staff will be available during intermission and after tonight's concert at the Music Building Box Office so that you may renew your Tutunov Piano Series Season Subscription

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Program Notes Continued

1802 biography of Bach. Its 32-bar theme opens and closes the work. Bach's subsequent variations focus on the bass line and harmony, resembling the style of a chaconne or passacaglia. Lasting 32 bars, each variation constitutes a separate movement, and this approach resulted in the largest individual keyboard work published in the 18th century.

Bach's fondness for numerology provides one point of departure for this massive work. He gathers the 30 variations in groups of three, writing a canon as the third variation in each set. Bach's canons also progress systematically throughout the work: a canon at the unison (Variation 3), followed by one at the interval of a second (Variation 6), finally concluding with a canon at the interval of a ninth (Variation 27). His exploration of canon is typically comprehensive, setting "the nine canons in eight different time signatures. The two that share 4/4 surely do so with a different tempo" (Bach scholar Peter Williams).

The first variation in each set of three consists of either a dance or a genre piece. The extensive collection of dances include a Polonaise (Variation 1), Passepied (4), Gigue (7), Sarabande (13), Minuet (19), and Gavotte (22). Bach's 'genre' variations include three fugues (Variations 10, 16, and 22), a French Overture (also 16), and a passionate Adagio in G Minor (25) that comprises the dramatic centerpiece of the work "slower and more intense...than any other movement" (Williams). Bach wrote "bright arabesque-like movements" (Williams) for the middle variations in each group of three. These are virtuosic showpieces usually requiring crossed hands on two manuals. Bach scholar John Butts believes "he had never composed such demanding music for keyboard" at such length until the Goldberg Variations.

Bach's spirit of comprehensiveness found in the other 1740s compositions mentioned above may have worked against him here, however. He wrote this massive compendium of technical challenges for the harpsichord (two manuals, continual hand-crossing, virtuoso figuration) at a time when the new fortepiano would soon supplant the harpsichord in popularity. As the harpsichord fell away, few artists tackled this demanding work. After the original publication of the Goldberg Variations in 1741, almost 150 years passed before another edition appeared. It gained widespread acceptance only in the 20th century, as both keyboard artists and the music public finally rediscovered its glories.

Program notes by Ed Wight

Program

Adagio in B minor, K. 540
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

Sonata in B-flat Major, K. 570
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

Intermission

Goldberg Variations, BWV 988
Johannes Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Peter Serkin is a Steinway Artist and has recorded for Arcana, Boston Records, Bridge, Decca, ECM, Koch Classics, New World Records, RCA/BMG, Telarc and Vanguard Classics.

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Ars longa vita brevis

Program Notes

MOZART ADAGIO in B MINOR, K. 540 (1788)

Mozart seldom employed the pathos and high drama often associated with the minor mode. He used the minor mode only twice in each major genre - symphonies, concertos, string quartets and piano sonatas. His single-movement keyboard works written in Vienna, however, more often feature its power. Written just three years before his death, this B Minor Adagio also offers a compendium of Mozart's extraordinary late style techniques.

The very first chord in the opening bar of this Sonata-form movement avoids establishing the tonic key, turning instead to a deceptive diminished 7th out of the key - further articulated by the first of many sforzando accents. And instead of providing fresh new melodies at every major point, typical of his earlier works, Mozart turns to mature, hard-won motivic consistency. The primary theme includes both a rhythmic motive employed in the secondary theme, and an opening motive which dominates the closing theme. Sudden dramatic contrasts between loud and soft dynamics occur everywhere, often concentrated within a single bar. Beethoven didn't invent such rhetoric.

Mozart's clarity of form usually includes an extensive phrase preparing for the recap. But here there is none; the bar before the recap opens with two 7th chords, both out of key. And unlike the mature works of Haydn and Beethoven, Mozart typically sustains the minor-mode emotion in the recap. Thus the exposition's secondary theme in D Major returns not in the expected B Major - but B Minor instead. This mysterious, dark intensity continues into the coda, which suddenly bursts into B Major sunshine only three bars from the end. The lack of harmonic preparation for key structural joints and the brevity of the resolution at the end draws Mozart much closer to Schumann than to conventional 18th-century style!

The rich and concentrated dramatic force of tonight's Adagio shows why so many early 19th-century musicians and critics considered Mozart a Romantic composer. Goethe wrote that Mozart burst the bounds of classical style. "All our endeavor...to confine ourselves to what is simple and limited was lost when Mozart appeared." Mozart scholar Arthur Hutchings considered the glorious Rondo in A Minor, K. 511 to be of "the finest quality." However, the Adagio in B Minor "goes deeper...I think it is Mozart's finest single work for piano solo."

MOZART PIANO SONATA in B-FLAT MAJOR, K. 570 (1789)

Mozart's 27 piano concertos (23 authentic) remained central to his career as a virtuoso in public concerts. He wrote only 18 piano sonatas, however, unlike other composer-pianists Haydn (over 50) and Beethoven (32). They play a much less prominent role in his career, and Mozart

Program Notes Continued

scholar Cliff Eisen writes "among reports of Mozart's own public performances of his piano music, sonatas are rarely found." This is Mozart, however, and Eisen also remarks that nevertheless "they contain some of his most engaging pieces."

Only a fragment of the sonata exists in Mozart's hand (bars 65 to the end of the first movement in the autograph manuscript). This compounded the situation of the sonata being little known in the generations after his death, existing only as a spurious, posthumous arrangement for violin and piano.

Without Mozart's guidance, how should one perform the primary theme of the opening Sonata form movement? The various sources differ: short slurs every bar (autograph recap), or one long slur (autograph development section, and entry in Mozart's own thematic catalogue). The movement is a lyrical delight, and again features Mozart's late monothematic approach to the secondary theme (basing it on the primary theme) though with a new countersubject. Yet Mozart's mature, dramatic power is not absent either; the development section opens with an abrupt plunge into D-flat major.

Mozart's slow movements in his final sonatas often turn to the deeper, more expressive Adagio tempo. This enhances the tender meditative mood of the slow Rondo movement, and heightens the power of Mozart's late harmonic vocabulary in the first episode - another powerful minor-mode passage. And the virtuosic world of the concerto is likewise never far away from the light-hearted Rondo finale. Music critic Richard Wigmore writes that this brief finale "is music of crystalline clarity and genuine elegance, and it always seems to be over too soon." Surprisingly, this work immediately followed the Sonata in C Major K. 545, written 'for beginners.' Arthur Hutchings says this B-flat sonata is "almost as little in length, but decidedly not for beginners."

BACH GOLDBERG VARIATIONS, BWV 998 (1741)

The last decade of Bach's life witnessed an extraordinarily comprehensive summation of his life's work. Begun in the 1720s, Bach completed the B Minor Mass in 1749 - the largest mass ever written by that time. The Musical Offering of 1747 consists of 13 compositions based on a single theme of King Frederick the Great. The Art of Fugue, left unfinished at Bach's death, offers yet another work based on a single theme. It presented the most exhaustive fugal treatment of any theme written by 1750.

The Goldberg Variations from 1741, with a theme and 30 variations, matches the historic scope of all these other compositions. Bach titled it "Aria with Diverse Variations," and the piece only acquired the "Goldberg" nickname sixty years later, in Johann Forkel's path-breaking