

**STÉPHANE LEMELIN,  
pianist**

**Friday, March 5, 1993 at 8:00 pm**

**Convocation Hall, Arts Building**

**Program**





## PROGRAM

Partita in B-Flat Major,  
BWV 825 (1726)

Johann Sebastian Bach  
(1685-1750)

Praeludium

Allemande

Corrente

Sarabande

Menuet I, II

Gigue

Suite für Klavier, Op. 25 (1924)

Arnold Schoenberg  
(1874-1951)

Prelude

Gavotte

Musette (and Gavotte da capo)

Intermezzo

Minuet

Gigue

## INTERMISSION

Sonata in B-Flat Major,  
Op. 106, (1817-1818)

Ludwig van Beethoven  
(1770-1827)

("Grosse Sonate für das Hammerklavier)

Allegro

Scherzo - Assai vivace

Adagio sostenuto

Largo - Allegro risoluto

(Fuga a tre voci, con alcune licenze)

## PROGRAM NOTES

### Bach, *Partita in B-flat Major*, BWV 825 (1726)

The instrumental suite of the Baroque originated as a combination of contrasting dance forms. Four dances - Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, and Gigue - were eventually established as the framework for the suite, with optional movements or *galanteries* inserted between the final two movements.

Prior to his appointment as Cantor of St. Thomas's School and Music Director of Leipzig in 1723, Bach had composed two collections of six suites each for the harpsichord: the French and the English suites. Occupied almost entirely with music for the church in the early years of his tenure at Leipzig, it was not until 1726 that Bach turned once again to writing for the keyboard. The masterly six Partitas, issued one per year from 1726 onward, and published collectively as Bach's Opus I, were the result. In their collected format, the Partitas constituted the first installment of the multi-volume **Klavierübung** (Keyboard Practice), a collection which would later include the famous **Goldberg Variations**. Composed at the end of the life of the Baroque suite form, Bach's Partitas represent a compendium of the most popular harpsichord genre of the time. Johann Nikolaus Forkel, writing some fifty years later, remarked that "the **Klavierübung** was much noticed at the time. Such compositions for the Clavier had not been seen or heard before, and the man who could play them was sure of a success."

The introductory Praeludium, written in three freely imitative parts, establishes the intimate character of the work. Similar in tone is the Allemande, with its flowing sixteenths. There follows a vivacious two-part Corrente in the Italian style, its lively triplet motion ceasing only at the cadences. Stately in character is the ensuing Sarabande, whose elaborate melody contributes to its deeply expressive character. A pair of Menuets, contrasting in style, comprise the inserted *galanterie* movements. The virtuosic gigue, complete with Scarlatti-like hand crossings, draws the work to its exciting close.

### Schoenberg, *Suite für Klavier*, Op. 25 (1924)

In his search for a new musical principle which would take the place of tonality, Schoenberg, in the years immediately following the First World War, developed what he termed "the method of composing with twelve

## Program notes (continued)

tones." The new technique enabled him to achieve coherence and unity in a musical composition without recourse to traditional procedures such as literal repetition, symmetrical phrases, resolution of dissonance into consonance, and a hierarchy of notes around a central tonic. At the same time, use of traditional features or forms was not precluded by the technique.

Six years of compositional silence preceded Schoenberg's first deliberate use of his newly developed tone rows in the *Fünf Klavierstücke* (five piano pieces), Op. 23, of which only the last employs a complete row of twelve tones. It was not until 1924, with the completion of the Suite, Op. 25, that he produced a work completely in the twelve-tone idiom. Regarding his new-found voice, Schoenberg remarked that "I find myself positively enabled to compose as freely and fantastically as one does only in one's youth, and nevertheless subject to a precisely definable esthetic discipline." The very rigor of the method had freed his imagination.

In his revival of the suite form - a genre favoured throughout the first half of the eighteenth century - Schoenberg affirmed his kinship with earlier masters of the form, Bach and Handel. As well, he found for himself a form whose compact movements were ideally suited to experimentation with his new musical language. Adopting a particularly strict application of the twelve-tone procedures, Schoenberg restricts himself in the Suite to a single tone row in only four versions: the original, its inversion, and two transpositions.

### I Prelude. **Rasch** (Fast).

The initial imitation between right and left-hand parts recalls the preludes of Bach. The dissonant intervals favoured by the dodecaphonic style - major sevenths, major ninths and diminished fifths - provide a certain harmonic bite.

### II Gavotte. **Etwas langsam, nicht hastig** (somewhat slow, not hurried).

Subtle rhythmic changes within the measure lend a flexible, even capricious quality. Repeated-note figures persist.

### III Musette. **Rascher** (Faster)

In the Baroque era, the Musette was a dance form of pastoral character with a drone bass. Schoenberg's Musette is structured in four-measure phrases, serving here to create the atmosphere of an

## Program notes (continued)

eighteenth-century dance form. The two-part (A-B) form likewise recalls an earlier era. Schoenberg's performance directions indicate that the Gavotte be repeated after the Musette, creating a larger-scale A-B-A form: Gavotte-Musette-Gavotte.

### IV Intermezzo.

Here, Schoenberg invokes one of the great types of Romantic piano music, the intermezzo of Brahms. Frequent rests and pauses create a curious impression of hesitation.

### V Minuet. Moderato

The form of the Classical minuet, as developed by Haydn and Mozart, is employed here: an A-B-A structure in which the middle section is the Trio. Schoenberg's triple metre is disguised here by syncopated patterns and smaller time values. In the Trio, the texture thins to two voices and the tone row is transformed into an inverted canon.

### VI Gigue. Rasch (Fast)

Schoenberg's use of 2/2 metre for the gigue is not a radical departure from traditional usage established in the Baroque. What is radical is his treatment of the rhythm, which alternates duple and triple patterns, or employs them simultaneously. Complex interlocking rhythms, based on rapid alternation of right and left hand, propel the Gigue forward to its decisive conclusion.

## Beethoven, *Sonata in B-flat*, Op. 106 (1817-1818)

The composition of Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata was achieved in the midst of what he described as "distressful circumstances." Preoccupied with such matters as the lawsuit over the custody of his nephew Karl and his own unmistakably deteriorating health, especially the deepening deafness, Beethoven's production of important works following the remarkably prolific period from 1800-1812 had fallen off strikingly. When in 1817 he set to work on the immense four-movement sonata in B-flat, published in 1818 as his Op. 106, he declared that it was to be his greatest. His first major work in five years, this *Grosse Sonate für das Hammerklavier* pointed the way to renewed compositional activity. A

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pivotal work, the Hammerklavier paved the way for such late masterpieces as the *Missa Solemnis*, the *Diabelli Variations* and the *Ninth Symphony*, as well as the last three piano sonatas and the late string quartets.

Beethoven dedicated his Op. 106 to his long-term patron, pupil and friend the Archduke Rudolf of Austria, who had already received in homage a number of significant works, including the *Trio in B-flat* which bears his name.

To the publisher Artaria, who issued the first Viennese edition of the work in 1819, Beethoven wrote that it was "a Sonata which will give much work to pianists when they will play it in fifty years." Indeed, Charles Rosen has remarked that "by contemporary standards it was monstrously long and scandalously difficult." Both by its size and by the amount of material which such an extended work calls for, the *Sonata Op. 106*, almost twice as long as the other sonatas, makes incredible demands upon both performer and listener. Extreme, and even arcane in style, this work has never achieved the popularity, as marked by frequency of performance, which earlier extended works such as the *Appassionata Sonata* (Op. 57) or the accessible and well-known *Eroica Symphony* (Op. 55) have attained.

Immense in proportion though it is, the *Hammerklavier* is highly unified in its structure and extremely concentrated in expression. The use of ascending and descending thirds affects virtually every detail of the work, as does a large-scale conflict between the tonic B-flat and B-natural. When Beethoven had completed the *Hammerklavier*, he said about it, "Now I know how to compose."

The opening *Allegro* is a grandiose *Sonata-Allegro* movement with two contrasting theme groups, the first of which establishes the tonic key of B-flat. The second group of themes, in G major, establishes the significant third relationship and introduces the B-flat/B opposition. The development section, beginning in E-flat major, is constructed almost entirely upon sequences of descending thirds. Modulating eventually to the remote key of B major, Beethoven establishes unequivocally the B-flat/B tension. The return to B-flat at the beginning of the *Recapitulation*, by its very abruptness, resolves none of the tensions created thus far. And so the *Recapitulation*, rather than simply restating earlier material, is occupied with the complex working out of previously established oppositions.

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The other movements of the Sonata follow very closely the patterns established in the first. Brusque contrasts characterize the Scherzo, whose main theme is a humorous version of the first movement's opening gesture. Once again, the structure of descending thirds is in evidence. The main theme of the trio, in B-flat minor, is remarkably similar to that of the Scherzo. The ubiquitous B makes a dramatic appearance near the end of the movement, a parodied reference to the climax of the first movement.

The Adagio Sostenuto is the longest Adagio Beethoven wrote for a Sonata. The highly ornate melody enhances the deeply expressive and meditative character of the movement. The apparently remote key of F-sharp minor is yet another instance of the important descending third relationship.

An improvisatory Largo, written in part without barlines, provides a transition to the dramatic fugal finale. Both the shape of the fugue subject and the modulation plan which follows reiterate both the unifying descent by thirds and the dramatic Bb/B opposition. Noteworthy as well is Beethoven's use of the trill in the fugue subject, where it functions not as an ornament but as an integral thematic element.

Notes by Marva Duerksen



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Tonight's recital is being recorded by Radio-Canada for future broadcast on *CHFA 680 AM* on March 29, 1993 at 6:00 pm and will be broadcast on the entire French FM network on a date TBA.