

CHRISTIAN TETZLAFF AND LARS VOGT

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17 / 7:30 PM

BING CONCERT HALL

PROGRAM NOTES

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

VIOLIN SONATA NO. 7 IN C MINOR, OP. 30, NO. 2 (1801–1802)

Violin sonatas were important to the young Beethoven—he wrote eight of his ten violin sonatas over four years, around the turn of the 18th century. The three Opus 30 sonatas were written when the piano was getting more brilliant and its hammers and strings more powerful. At the same time, virtuoso violinists were strengthening their fiddles, restringing them and playing with stronger bows. As performers were beginning to play in larger halls, a more robust sound was needed. Opus 30 marks a clear step along the way towards the resonance, heroism, and virtuosity of the *Kreutzer* Sonata of 1803. The second sonata is the most dramatic of the three and one of Beethoven's finest. Beethoven reserved its key of C minor for some of his most fiery music. The piano first hints at an opening theme with a terse, darkly colored statement, more threat than theme at this stage. It suggests that the music is going to develop on a large scale, carved out of fragments of themes rather than unfolding out of expansive melodic phrases. When it arrives in the violin part, the theme contains much latent power waiting to be unleashed, and Beethoven introduces us to its force in a very controlled manner. The slow movement begins as the noblest of *Adagios*, but its serene course is twice rudely interrupted by ferocious C major scales from the piano and some highly disorienting harmonies. A rustic scherzo, in the major key, with some of its seams consciously showing, provides a little humor. Then, Beethoven returns to the minor key for the storm of the finale.

BÉLA BARTÓK (1881–1945)

VIOLIN SONATA NO. 2, BB 85 (1922)

The violin figures prominently throughout Bartók's creative work, from an early *Andante* of 1902 to the intense, highly focused Sonata for Solo Violin of 1944, his last chamber work. The Hungarian composer concentrated entirely on his two numbered violin sonatas over a 14-month period in late 1921–1922. At the time he was exploring the expressive and structural possibilities of incorporating an essentially nontonal musical language into large-scale works; the ballet score *The Miraculous Mandarin* is the best known of these works. The two violin sonatas, exploiting the tensions between two fundamentally different instruments, found different solutions. The second is essentially in one 20-minute movement, where a slow, generally lyrical opening movement leads into a quicker second, propelled by dance tunes. Unity is provided by an opening seemingly improvisatory violin theme, at first hesitant on one note and then melancholy, built around falling thirds. This theme will appear five times throughout the sonata at key points. Four of these underpin the first movement's musical structure, which is derived from the traditional opening-movement sonata form but is here compressed, with thematic development taking place throughout rather than largely confined to a central section. The falling theme, rhapsodic and improvisatory, closes the movement. The closing six-note scale from the violin is heard again, pizzicato, as the second movement opens. This is just one strand of a complex web of thematic interrelationships throughout the work. The themes of the movement are derived from the folk music that Bartók was gathering at the time, but they are extended through the use of the full 12 tones of the Western scale. The music is dense as it drives forward, with the interval of a tritone dislocating any feeling of tonality until the main theme of the sonata reaches a final, sublime point of repose in an extended C major chord.



WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)
VIOLIN SONATA IN F MAJOR, K. 377 (1781)

This is the third of a set of six violin sonatas that Mozart wrote in the summer of 1781 as his calling card for his newly adopted city of Vienna. The Viennese publisher Artaria announced them as “Six sonatas for the keyboard with the accompaniment of a violin by the moderately well-known and celebrated Herr Wolfgang Amadé Mozart, op. 2.” They were an immediate success and helped spread Mozart’s reputation even further afield. The bright, cheerful theme of the F Major Sonata is shared equally between both keyboard and violin, and the two instruments continue to develop the material throughout its compact opening movement. The music is full of surprising turns and looks ahead to the three innovative piano concerti (K. 413–415) that Mozart was to write the following winter. The emotional heart of the work, and its longest movement, is the slow movement—a set of six variations on a touching and somewhat melancholy minor-key theme. With the second half of each variation more extended and ornate than the first, the variations grow increasingly urgent and virtuoso. The fifth variation relaxes the tension in the major key, and the music continues to unwind during the gently rocking *Siciliano* and extended coda that follow. In the finale, Mozart takes apart the formal conventions of the minuet, adding two contrasting episodes and giving the long-established minuet a thoroughly up-to-date feel.

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797–1828)
RONDO IN B MINOR FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO, OP. 70, D. 895, RONDO BRILLANT (1826)

With regular musical practice, chamber music and daily orchestral rehearsals at the Vienna City Seminary, and family string quartet evenings at home, the young Schubert was well trained as a violinist. He wrote this demanding Rondo in 1826 for Josef Slavík, a young Bohemian virtuoso to whom he had been introduced. Slavík performed it privately at the home of the Viennese music publisher Domenico Artaria. Three months later, Artaria added it to his catalogue, calling it *Rondo brillant*, and it became Schubert’s only published work for violin. The Rondo is on a large scale and is prefaced by an introduction that is to generate many of the work’s ideas. The Rondo itself combines a somewhat traditional structure (ABACA, where A is the main theme and B and C are extended episodes that introduce new themes) with the rather more complex sonata-rondo form. All of this means that there are many surprises in store—unexpected turns, startling stepwise shifts of key, and a brilliant coda that brings back several of the themes heard earlier.

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