

The Ford Theatre Foundation presents
JON NAKAMATSU
Pianist
August 27, 2004 at 8:30 p.m.
Ford Amphitheatre

Program

Joseph Wöfl (1773-1812)

Sonata in E Major, Op. 33, No. 3

Allegro

Andante cantabile

Rondo: Allegretto

Robert Schumann (1810-1858)

Papillons, Op. 2

Introduction: Moderato

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 1) no indication | 7) Semplice |
| 2) Prestissimo | 8) no indication |
| 3) no indication | 9) Prestissimo |
| 4) Presto | 10) Vivo |
| 5) (Grazioso) | 11) no indication |
| 6) no indication | 12) Finale |

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Fantasy in f-sharp minor, Op. 28

Intermission

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Sonata No. 3 in f minor, Op. 5

Allegro maestoso

Andante

Scherzo: Allegro energico

Intermezzo: Andante molto

Finale: Allegro moderato ma rubato

Steinway Piano provided by Fields Piano

Recordings: harmonia mundi usa

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Jon Nakamatsu in Recital at the Ford is generously supported by
The Colburn Foundation
The Edmund D. Edelman Foundation for Music and the Performing Arts
and Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky

Special thanks to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors for their continuing support of the
Ford Amphitheatre season, a program of the Los Angeles County Arts Commission.



A native of California, **JON NAKAMATSU** claimed a distinguished place on the international musical scene in June, 1997 when named the Gold Medalist of the Tenth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, the only American to have achieved this distinction since 1981. A former high school German teacher, he became a popular hero overnight in the highly traditional medium of classical music.

Following a season highlighted by return engagements with the San Francisco Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra and Annapolis, Baton Rouge and Pacific Symphony Orchestras, as well as performances with the orchestras of Brevard, Marin, Peninsula, Rogue Valley and West Virginia and the Masterworks Chorale at San Mateo, recitals in Bellevue (WA), Bozeman, Columbus (GA), Corrales (NM), Fort Worth, Fort Myers, Knoxville and San Jose as well as Milan, Italy, and chamber music performances with the Ives Quartet, Jon Nakamatsu's summer activities include re-engagements with San Francisco's Midsummer Mozart Festival, Connecticut's famed "Summer Music at Harkness" festival and Colorado's Strings in the Mountains, as well as a pair of chamber music performances at the Skaneateles Festival. Continuing his close relationship with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, he also returns with them to the Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival, in a program repeated at the

RPO's summer home at the Finger Lakes Performing Arts Center in Canandaigua, NY.

During the summer of 1997, Jon Nakamatsu replaced Vladimir Ashkenazy in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro as soloist with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, and performed at Tanglewood with the Boston Pops, the Klavier Festival Ruhr in Germany and the Montpellier Festival in France. Since then, he has also appeared as soloist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl and The New World Symphony, as well as the orchestras of Buffalo, Charlotte, Cincinnati, Dallas, Dayton, Detroit, Fort Worth, Honolulu, Milwaukee, Naples, New Mexico, Rochester, San Antonio, San Francisco, San Jose, Seattle, Syracuse, Toledo and Utah. Abroad, he has been heard as soloist with Italy's famed Orchestra del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Berlin's Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach Chamber Orchestra and Santo Domingo's Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional. Mr. Nakamatsu has collaborated with many of today's leading conductors, among them George Cleve, Sergiu Comissiona, James Conlon, Leslie B. Dunner, Philippe Entremont, Neal Gittleman, Miguel Harth-Bedoya, Marek Janowski, Raymond Leppard, Jahja Ling, Keith Lockhart, David Lockington, Larry Rachleff, Stephen Rogers Radcliffe, Peter Rubardt, Matthew Savery, Alfred Savia, Carl St. Clair, Christopher Seaman, Stanislaw Skrowaczski, Markand Thakar, Hans Vonk and Samuel Wong. His 1998-99 season was highlighted by a White House performance of *Rhapsody in Blue*, hosted by President and Mrs. Clinton.

Jon Nakamatsu's extensive recital tours throughout the United States and Europe have featured debuts in New York City (Carnegie Hall), Washington, DC (John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts), Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Miami, Houston, San Francisco, Paris, London and Milan. The recipient of the Steven De Groote Memorial Award for his semifinal round chamber music performances at the Cliburn competition, he has subsequently collaborated with various chamber ensembles, among them the Brentano, Ives, Manhattan, Miami, St. Lawrence, Tokyo and Ying String Quartets. In both 2000 and 2002, he toured the United States with the Berlin Philharmonic Woodwind Quintet.

In July 1999, Jon Nakamatsu made his debut at France's Evian Music Festival and, one year later, he returned to the Tanglewood Music Festival, the famed summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He has also appeared at the Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival with Christopher Seaman and the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, Festival Casals de Puerto Rico, performing with the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra, under the baton of Carl St. Clair, and at the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Tacoma International Music Festival, Lincoln's Meadowlark Music Festival and California's Midsummer Mozart Festival.

Named Debut Artist of the Year (1998) by NPR's "Performance Today," Jon Nakamatsu has been profiled by "CBS Sunday Morning" and Reader's Digest magazine, and is featured in *Playing with Fire*, a documentary about the Tenth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, aired nationwide on PBS. Earlier, in 1995, he was named the First Prize winner of Miami's Fifth United States Chopin Piano Competition. Mr. Nakamatsu records exclusively for harmonia mundi usa, which has released five CDs, including an orchestral album containing performances of Rachmaninoff's Third Piano Concerto and *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, with Christopher Seaman and the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, and, most recently, an album of four sonatas by Joseph Wöfl.

Jon Nakamatsu has studied privately with Marina Derryberry since the age of six, has worked with Karl Ulrich Schnabel, and studied composition and orchestration with Dr. Leonard Stein of the Schoenberg Institute at the University of Southern California. In addition, he has pursued extensive studies in chamber music and musicology. Mr. Nakamatsu is a graduate of Stanford University with a bachelor's degree in German Studies and a master's degree in Education.

Program Notes

Joseph Wöfl (1773-1812) Sonata in E Major, Op. 33, No. 3

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following are excerpts from the liner notes written for the harmonia mundi CD of Wöfl Sonatas by Chris Salocks.

As we move further away from Beethoven's time, with the concert repertoire having coalesced (or ossified!) into a certified Canon of Great Works, there seems to be less room on the stage for his musical colleagues, some of whom may have enjoyed one-time recognition and plaudits alongside him, and who may even have earned the hard-won respect of the master himself.

One of these overshadowed composers was Joseph Wöfl, Beethoven's slightly younger contemporary, who, thirteen years after his death in 1812, was still hailed in England (in John S. Sainsbury's 1825 *A Dictionary of Musicians from the Earliest Times*) as "the celebrated pianist and composer" whose playing was "the theme of universal admiration" and whose 1801 reputation in Paris as "the most extraordinary pianist in Europe" was still worthy of note. Wöfl's attainments extended even beyond the musical sphere – Tomášek wrote of his "artistic billiard playing" (which nevertheless could cost him a portion of his concert proceeds, when he lost his wagers!)...

In 1799, Wöfl and Beethoven were pitted against each other in a contest of keyboard virtuosity and improvisation at the villa of Baron Raymond [?Raymund] von Wetzlar. An account of this pianistic combat (written "thirty years after the events it describes") has been left to us by Ignaz von Seyfried and is quoted in Alexander Wheelock Thayer's *Life of Beethoven*:

Sometimes they would seat themselves at two pianofortes and improvise alternately on themes which they gave each other, and thus created many a four-handed Capriccio which, if it could have been put upon paper at the moment, would surely have bidden defiance to time...

The **Sonatas, Op. 33**... were first published by Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig, but were also brought out in London by Clementi... In all three of these works, Wöfl often restricts himself to a more limited octave range, but, mindful of the continuing evolution of pianos at this time, he allows for some alternate readings to suit newer instruments with their expanded compass. Striking passages abound in these works, but perhaps the Rondo finale from the C-major Sonata, the first of the set, stands out by virtue of its initial yodeling theme, which at the same time suggests a Weber-like *moto perpetuo*. Composer Vernon Duke described the Andante middle movement of the D-minor Sonata as "celestially mellifluous," and the closing Alla Polacca in the same work exudes charm in abundance. The opening Allegro of the E-major Sonata, the last of the set, employs dotted-rhythm military figures, so characteristic of Mozart, with a vivid brilliance. Like Mozart, Wöfl must have had a fondness for these figures, for he also uses them in the Allegro Molto of the Sonata Op.25, to far different, more somber, expressive ends.

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Robert Schumann (1810–1856) Papillions ("Butterfly"), Op. 2 (1830)

Though Beethoven in his Bagatelles and Schubert in his Moments Musicaux and Impromptus had already made use of the miniature, it was Schumann who made the form serve its highest purposes, and it is through the miniature, pictorial fantasy pieces that his greatness is revealed. Papillions, a series of 12 minatures, is Opus 2 of a 29-opus, decade-long marathon of piano compositions in this genre that put Schumann on the compositional map. The collection includes such celebrated and popular works as Carnival, Fantasiestücke and Kinderszenen.

The title Papillions could not have been more apropos, since nearly all of the 12 pieces went through an elaborate metamorphosis, like larvae, before emerging in their final collective graceful charm. Two-handed waltzes and four-handed polonaises (the latter reminiscent of Schubert) composed only a few years prior were revised, reinvented and welded together, all under the broad inspiration of a novel by Jean Paul, one of Schumann's favorite authors, entitled *Flegeljarhe* (*Year of Indiscretion*), which depicts a masked ball.

With a little imagination, you can almost experience the viewpoint of the participants of such a party – admiring one another flirtatiously, forming impressions and moving on – in the constantly shifting musical moods of each little section. Costumes in every imaginable color, flavor and style, whirl by to the orchestra's $\frac{3}{4}$ time; the mystery, the magic and the playfulness all come through in Schumann's rendering.

The most clearly pictorial of the 12 segments is the finale based on the "Grandfather's Dance," a familiar tune of the time which traditionally closed a German ball, complete with a tolling clock to denote the end of the festivities. Can you tell what time Schumann's ball ends?

– Sherrill Bennett Herring

Felix Bartholdy Mendelssohn (1809 – 1847)
Fantasia in f# minor, Op. 28 (1833)

German born composer Felix Mendelssohn managed to reconcile a remarkable number of activities and accomplishments in his short lifetime. He was, of course, a composer (one of the most influential of his time), a pianist (a renowned virtuoso), a violist (albeit of very limited abilities), a conductor (an important innovator and one of the first to use a baton), an administrator (founder and director of the Leipzig Conservatory), a promoter of young talent (Joachim and Danish composer Niels Gade), a musicologist (he resurrected Bach's St. Matthew Passion and Schubert's Great C Major Symphony), and finally, he was a loving husband and father of five children. A kind of musical Renaissance man, Mendelssohn, on his first visit to London in 1832, conducted the London Philharmonic, performed piano recitals, even produced a benefit concert for flood victims, and established himself as the darling of British society.

In 1829, Mendelssohn visited Scotland, a country that captured his fascination and his compositional interest most notably in *The Hebrides Overture* and the *Third Symphony*, the "Scottish." While the origins of the *Fantasia* remain unclear, there is evidence that the original version, conceived as early as 1828 (one year prior to the Scottish sojourn), carried the working title "Scottish Sonata" (*Sonate écossaise*). We may never know if Mendelssohn intended a particular Scottish program for the *Fantasia* since he changed the working title upon publishing the work in 1833. Still, certain features, notably in the first movement, betray the likelihood of some programmatic inspiration, namely, the use of widely spaced harmonies and open, hunting-horn style chords, dramatically dissonant crescendos, and open pedal techniques, all of which point to similar special effects in Mendelssohn's later Scottish works.

The *Fantasia* is comprised of three movements, played without separation in progressively faster tempos: *Andante*, *Allegro* and *Presto*, the last a dramatic, full-length sonata movement that carries the structural weight of the composition. In the first movement, the brooding, melancholy *Andante* is prefaced by a series of rapid hushed arpeggiations that rise from the depths of the piano. Out of this shadowy opening emerges two melodious sections. The arpeggiations of the opening return to provide a kind of connective tissue between movements. In the center movement, Mendelssohn works up the arpeggiations into an extended crescendo made more thrilling by rising chromatic scales in the bass. When the two principal themes return, they are followed by a coda featuring an open-pedal passage in which the first theme momentarily reappears, echolike, an effect not unlike the close of the *Hebrides Overture*. — SBH

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
Piano Sonata No. 3 in f minor Op. 5 (1853)

In fair contrast to Schumann's wistful miniatures tonight is this chunky Brahms sonata. Although Brahms in his younger years fell briefly under the spell of Schumann, he had the foresight to see that the new, Romantic style of composition was not for him. Showing great artistic integrity, he chose the conventional forms, he venerated the classical masters, and he struggled to perfect his own technique so as to follow in their footsteps. All that being said, the 3rd Piano sonata is one of most romantic sounding sonatas in the genre with its lush harmonies, delicate voicings and tender-hearted themes. In terms of form, it is nearly symphonic in its scope, texture and content.

The widely flung gestures of the opening movement cool to a dour march followed by a more lyrical second theme, standard development and "mysterioso" section before ending off with a return of the opening theme.

To the ethereal *Andante espressivo*, Brahms adds the following poem at the head of his score, noting only the poem, not the source:

"Twilight falls, the moonlight shines,
Two hearts are united in love,
And keep themselves in bliss enclosed."

The exquisite music that follows, like lovers too naked for the day, gently unfolds with gossamer melodies and unusually wide chordal spacing, lending an otherworldly quality, all leading to triumphant intensity then floating back to a mood of hushed serenity.

With the bright *Scherzo* comes the rushing release of pent up energy. A dramatic, minor-keyed theme followed by a broad, tranquil, almost hymn-like melody steadily expands its range and strength until it can reincorporate the rhythm of the *Scherzo* which ends the movement.

The *intermezzo* reminds us of the tenderness of the previous *Andante* before leading us to the finale, a tribute to Brahms' musical stature for its ability to both crown and unify the amazing contrast that came before it. The final coda, which ends in major, is preceded by a feat of rhythmic excitement and represents the complete antithesis of the struggle with which the work began. — SBH

Program Annotator

Sherrill Bennett Herring has a Bachelor's Degree in Music Theory from the University of Michigan. She performs regularly as a flutist at the First Presbyterian Church of Encino where she also runs an annual chamber music concert series. She resides in Sherman Oaks with her husband and three year old son.