Stella Chen, violin  
Henry Kramer, piano

ADAGIO IN E MAJOR, K. 261 (1776)  
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

PARTITA FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO (1955)  
Grażyna Bacewicz (1909–69)  
Preludium: Grave –  
Toccata: Vivace  
Intermezzo: Andantino melancolio  
Rondo: Presto

VIOLIN SONATA NO. 2, IN G MAJOR (1923–7)  
Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)  
Allegretto  
Blues: Moderato  
Perpetuum mobile: Allegro

:: INTERMISSION ::

RONDO IN B MINOR, FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO, OP. 70,  
D. 895 (1826) [RONDO BRILLANT]  
Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

NO-MAN’S-LAND LULLABY (1996)  
Eleanor Alberga (b. 1949)

THE CARMEN FANTASIE (1946)  
Franz Waxman (1906–1967)
Mozart played the five violin concertos he wrote during his teens while still first concertmaster of the court orchestra in Salzburg. His skill on the violin was considerable. "I played as though I were the finest fiddler in all Europe," he wrote to his father, after playing solo movements in one of his own serenades in Munich. His skill on the violin had taken the private gathering by surprise. "You yourself do not know how well you play the violin," Leopold Mozart wrote in reply. "Many people do not even know that you play the violin, since you have been known from childhood as a keyboard player. As one of the leading authorities on violin technique of his day, Leopold's endorsement of his son's skill on the instrument carries some weight. "Why, he could play anything," Italian virtuoso Antonio Brunetti, Mozart's successor in Salzburg, said to Leopold. Brunetti was evidently of the opinion that Mozart could compose anything, too, since on three occasions, he asked for substitute movements for Mozart concertos. As a result, we have three orphaned movements for violin and orchestra, two Rondos (K. 269 and K. 373) and the elegant E major Adagio, K. 261 that opens this evening's concert. This was requested to replace the slow movement of the A major violin concerto, K. 219 which Brunetti found 'too studied' or 'affected' (student) for his liking, but which audiences ever since have found very much to their liking. The Adagio he received is a movement of great beauty and tranquility, maybe a little easier from a technical standpoint, and shorter.

**PARTITA FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO**

Grażyna Bacewicz (b. Łódź, Poland, February 5, 1909; d. Warsaw, January 17, 1969) Composed 1955, 15 minutes

The determination in her words is clear. Grażyna Bacewicz achieved much, living through some of the most turbulent times in Poland's history, not only as a composer, but as a performer (virtuoso violinist and pianist) and, indeed, as a national figure. Born to a Polish mother and Lithuanian father in 1909, her music was shaped by the experiences of living in Poland until 1939, when she left for Paris for medical treatment of an eye. She returned to Poland in 1945 and soon became a leading figure in Polish music. Her compositions frequently included violin and, by the time of her sudden death just before she reached 60, she had completed seven violin concertos, concertos for piano (which she premièred herself), for two pianos, for viola and for cello, five violin sonatas, four symphonies, seven string quartets, ballet scores, much incidental music, film music, and music for radio broadcast—some 200 scores in all. Constantly traveling to serve on international competition juries, she was additionally Vice-President of the Polish Composers' Union. A couple of novels and numerous short stories remain unpublished.

The music of Bacewicz is frequently referred to as neoclassic in idiom, though she was unhappy with the term. The four-movement Partita was the first work to follow a serious car accident which significantly curtailed her performing career and accelerated her composing. In the Preludio, a lyrical violin sings over a sternly marching, somewhat astringent piano accompaniment. The Toccata is an exuberant perpetuum mobile, driven forward by the violin, rhythmically propelled by the piano. The Intermezzo looks back to the texture of the opening movement, though now with a melancholy, muted and deeply personal edge. In complete contrast, the Rondo finale brings witty, scherzo-like brilliance to Bacewicz's palette. The industrious composer made an orchestral version of the Partita after completing this duo version.

**ADAGIO IN E MAJOR, K. 261**

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (b. Salzburg, Austria, January 27, 1756; d. Vienna, December 5, 1791) Composed 1776, 7 minutes

"I think to compose one has to work very intensely. One has to pause between composing different works, but interruptions shouldn't be made when you are in the middle of writing a piece. I'm capable of working on one composition for many hours daily. Usually, I take a break in the middle of the day, but even during the break my brain keeps on working. I like to get very, very tired. It's sometimes than that I suddenly get my best ideas." (Grażyna Bacewicz)

The beauty and tranquility, maybe a little easier from a technical standpoint, and shorter.

**RONDO IN B MINOR, FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO, OP. 70, D. 895 (RONDO BRILLANT)**

Franz Schubert (b. Vienna, Austria, January 31, 1797; d. Vienna, November 19, 1828) Composed 1826, 14 minutes

With regular musical practice, chamber music and daily orchestral rehearsals at the Vienna City Seminary, plus family string quartet evenings at home, the young Schubert was well trained as a violinist. He wrote this demanding Rondo in 1826 for Josef Slavik, a young Bohemian virtuoso to whom he had been introduced. Schubert performed it privately at the home of the Viennese music publisher Domenico Artaria. Three months later, Artaria added it to his catalog, titling 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 which means that there are many surprises in store, unexpected turns, starting stepwise shifts of key and a brilliant coda that brings back several of the themes heard earlier.

**VIOLIN SONATA NO. 2, IN G MAJOR**

Maurice Ravel (b. Ciboure, France, March 7, 1875; d. Paris, December 28, 1937) Composed 1923-7, 8 minutes

Ravel’s Blues is the centerpiece of his Second Violin Sonata. In it, the violin frequently echoes the wailing saxophone, and both instruments recreate the sounds of the strummed banjo. One critic has even found echoes and borrowings from Jelly Roll Morton’s Black Bottom Stomp. Ravel admitted to having been impressed by the “nerve-wracking virtuosity” of the African American jazz musicians in 1920s Paris. Nevertheless, he insisted that the spirit of the music is Gallic to the core. "It is French music – Ravel’s music – that I have written," he told a reporter while touring the piece in the United States and Canada.

The Violin Sonata is his final chamber work. Ravel joked that it took him four years (1923-27) to get rid of all the unnecessary notes. "In writing my Sonata, two fundamentally incompatible instruments, I assumed the task . . . of emphasizing their irreconcilability," he said. Still, like Debussy 20 years earlier, Ravel must have sensed deep down that opposites can attract. The opening Allegretto main theme is graceful and lyrical when heard on violin, more angular on the piano. It is contrasted with a persistent quietly ‘tapping’ figure which assumes more importance as this pastoral opening movement progresses. The musical material is shared between the instruments equally and fluently, with never an extraneous note. After the Blues movement, the finale is a driving perpetuum mobile, led by the violin, with simple piano accompaniment. It brings back themes from the two earlier movements. The demanding violin writing is reminiscent of Ravel’s virtuoso violin showpiece Tzigane, which he also wrote while this sonata was being composed.

**NO-MAN’S-LAND LULLABY**

Eleanor Alberga (b. Kingston, Jamaica, 1949) Composed 1996; 11 minutes

Winning the Royal Schools of Music Scholarship for the West Indies at the age of 19 took Eleanor Alberga to London and the Royal Academy of Music, studying piano and singing. She has since been Musical Director of The London Contemporary Dance Theatre and, since then, developed a full-time career composing. In 2015, her commissioned work ARISE, ATHEMALI opened the Last Night of the BBC Proms. Her calming No-Man’s-Land Lullaby is a gentle duo that only reveals its secret at the end. Eleanor Alberga tells how the piece came about:

Visiting parts of central Europe over the summer of 1994, I was struck by the almost unreal beauty of the landscapes. Yet, I received a heavy sadness in the atmosphere that took me back to the events of half a century ago, some of which had been played out against this very scenery. At the same time, I was visited by a melody that arrived unbidden and would not leave me alone. It seemed, however, to offer comfort.

It was the imagery of the First World War that finally brought these things together, especially the image of men dying slowly and uncomforted in a place called 'No-man’s-land.' I am especially indebted to Paul Fussell’s book The Great War and Modern Memory for laying out so clearly the life of soldiers in the trenches. The piece is cast in three sections and is entirely based on the melody that emerges most identifiably towards the end.
THE CARMEN FANTASIE
Franz Waxman (b. Königshütte, Germany, December 24, 1906; d. Los Angeles, February 24, 1967)
Composed 1946; 10 minutes

Franz [Wachsmann] Waxman arrived in Hollywood in 1934, just as the American movie began to demand significant scores from its house composers. His ability to write memorable, lyrical melodies and evoke time, place and emotion in a fluent manner soon drew him to the front ranks of screen composers. Not yet 30, Waxman arrived with a good reputation for his orchestrating and conducting of Friedrich Holländer’s music for The Blue Angel, starring Marlene Dietrich in her first role. In Hollywood he went on to write 144 film scores, beginning with The Bride of Frankenstein and later including Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Rebecca, Suspicion, Prince Valiant, Humoresque and the two which won Academy Awards – Sunset Boulevard (1950) and A Place in the Sun (1951). Unlike many of his fellow European immigrants, Waxman found both professional and personal success in Hollywood. In 1948 he founded the Los Angeles International Music Festival and, as a conductor gave premieres of scores by leading composers of the day. He also took on guest conducting work with American and European orchestras and knew many leading performers. His concert scores include an oratorio, Joshua (1959), and the dramatic song cycle The Song of Terezin (1965), his last composition. For his score to the film Humoresque (1946), he wrote a piece based on themes from Bizet’s Carmen. His Beverly Hills neighbor, Jascha Heifetz, asked him to arrange it for violin and orchestra and Waxman promptly delivered his Fantasie, which includes Bizet’s Habanera, Seguidilla, Card Scene, Gypsy Dance and more.

— Program notes © 2022 Keith Horner. Comments welcomed: khnotes@sympatico.ca

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

STELLA CHEN, violin

Violinist Stella Chen has garnered worldwide attention with her first-prize win at the 2019 Queen Elizabeth International Violin Competition, followed by receiving the 2020 Avery Fisher Career Grant and the 2020 Lincoln Center Emerging Artist Award. In 2021-22 she joined the Bowers Program (formerly CMS Two) at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and made her Carnegie Hall recital debut. She was also the first recipient of the Robert Levin Award from Harvard University, the top prize winner of the Tibor Varga International Violin Competition and youngest ever prize winner of the Menuhin Competition. A graduate of the Harvard/New England Conservatory Dual Degree Program, Stella received a Bachelor of Arts in psychology with honors from Harvard University and a Master of Music from the New England Conservatory. Currently, Stella is a C.V. Starr doctoral candidate at the Juilliard School and a professional studies candidate at Kronberg Academy. She plays the ‘Huggins’ 1708 Stradivarius violin, generously on loan from the Nippon Music Foundation.

HENRY KRAMER, piano

Pianist Henry Kramer has developed a reputation as a musician of rare sensitivity. In 2016, he garnered international recognition with a Second Prize win in the Queen Elisabeth Competition. Most recently, he was awarded a 2019 Avery Fisher Career Grant by Lincoln Center, as well as being the winner in the National Chopin Competition, the Montreal International Competition and the China Shanghai International Piano Competition. A versatile performer, Kramer has soloed in concertos with numerous orchestras, performed in recital and is a sought-after collaborator. Additionally, Kramer is the L. Rexford Whiddon Distinguished Chair in Piano at the Schwob School of Music at Columbus State University. He graduated from the Juilliard School and received his Doctorate of Musical Arts from the Yale School of Music. Kramer is a Steinway Artist.