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PREVIEW
NOTES

Thomas Zehetmair, violin
Friday, May 20 • 8:00 PM — Perelman Theater

Background

One of the most significant violinists of his generation, Thomas Zehetmair is highly respected as a violinist, conductor and chamber musician. Born into a musical family in Salzburg, he studied violin with his father at the Mozarteum and made his debut, at the age of 16, at the 1977 Salzburg Festival. Now a soloist of international standing, he is a regular guest with the world's leading orchestras. In 1994 he formed the Zehetmair Quartet, with whom he has recorded string quartets by Hartmann, Schumann, and Bartok.

Program

Sonata in A Minor, BWV 1003

Johann Sebastian Bach

Born: Mar. 21, 1685 in Eisenach, Germany

Died: Jul. 28, 1750 in Leipzig, Germany

Composed: 1720

Last PCMS performance: Christian Tetzlaff in 2008

Duration: 23 minutes

A rhapsodic Grave opens the second Sonata in A minor. At such a slow tempo, the highly ornamented melody seems to meander at will, navigating a course of highly contrasting rhythms and decorative flourishes. The overall "free" nature of the Grave makes it sound like a prelude to the ensuing movement. As in all three violin sonatas, the second movement is a fugue. Daunting in both size and complexity, it pushes forward relentlessly, creating a dense contrapuntal web. Bach sets the third movement apart from the others through both an Andante tempo and contrasting key. The writing is more homophonic here, with a calm melody that provides a needed foil to the harsh energy of the preceding Fugue. A lively Allegro, rich with rhythmic and melodic variations, returns to A minor and closes the piece.

Solo Sonata No. 1

Solo Sonata No. 2

Karl Amadeus Hartmann

Born: Aug. 2, 1905 in Munich, Germany

Died: Dec. 5, 1963 in Munich

Composed: 1927

Last PCMS performance: PCMS premieres

Duration: 32 minutes (for both pieces)

A key figure in the rebuilding of German musical life after World War II, Hartmann employed Baroque, jazz and various other musical elements to forge an eclectic style influenced by Reger, Stravinsky, and Hindemith. Versatile, he produced operas, symphonies, chamber and choral music and solo works for piano and violin. His reputation grew in the 1950s, and Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra premiered his Symphony No. 7 here in 1957-58.

Partita in D Minor, BWV 1004

Johann Sebastian Bach

Composed: 1720

Last PCMS performance: Christian Tetzlaff in 2008

Duration: 28 minutes

Alongside Paganini's 24 Caprices and Bach's cello suites, his Partitas and Sonatas for solo violin stand out among their comparatively few siblings as magnificent music written for an unaccompanied stringed instrument. And while they also represent the zenith of polyphonic writing for a non-keyboard instrument, Bach's sonatas and partitas were also crucial in the development of violin technique. With their colossal scope, huge technical demands and musical complexity, and notwithstanding their awesome intellectual intensity, they transcended anything that had preceded them.