



Chopin Notes

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Upcoming Events:

Violin Recital

Mariusz Patyra, violin
Giovanni Casella, piano
October 19, 2008, 5:00 pm
Roswell Cultural Arts Center
Winner of Niccolò Paganini International Violin Competition in 2001. See our website for the information about the After Concert Essay Contest.

Chopin Society of Atlanta Competition—Deadline for submitting Essays: **November 22, 2008**—see p. 4 for details.

Chopin Society of Atlanta Fundraiser—**February, 2009**, details TBA.

Concert tickets are always discounted for members of the Chopin Society of Atlanta. To become a member join online at www.chopinatlanta.org or call 770.663.0620

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“You are human first...”

An Exclusive Interview with Mariusz Patyra

By Bozena U. Zaremba

When people talk about the violin, the word “virtuoso” is often used, probably more often than with any other instrument. Why, in your opinion?

Mainly because many people associate the violin with Niccolò Paganini, a phenomenon who really started a new era. It was a revolution. Techniques like pizzicato, staccato or double flageolets, which we owe to Paganini, had been unheard of before him. At that point our understanding of virtuosity came into new light.

In your interpretations one can hear incredible technical skill but no flashiness, while in romantic pieces, there is great emotion but no sentimentality. Is this balance between technical prowess and expression intentional?

I am really proud that you think this way. I had to work hard to achieve this sound. Being very self-critical, I have always been raising the bar higher and higher. I owe this to my mom, who had never let me skip a note till I was 19. At the age of fifteen I was able to take on pieces with the highest degree of virtuosity. I worked on my technical skill for many years, but life experience has had a significant influence on the expression in my interpretations.

Did this process affect the way you play Paganini?

The difficulty of interpreting Paganini's music lies in the understanding of his fundamental approach to music. Paganini did not aim for virtuosity, strange as it may seem. If you want to play Paganini well, you need to remember that he loved opera *bel canto*. My mom always stressed that his music conveyed the beauty with the highest degree of virtuosity. As long as I can discover and admire this beauty, I will be able to understand Paganini's music and its message. Additional difficulty lies in making it sound as if it were light and easy.

During your U.S. concert tour you will be playing nocturnes by Chopin, who is associated practically only with the piano. Chopin on violin? Sounds like blasphemy [laughs].

Chopin's music has found its place in the program to honor the Chopin Society's mission. In my opinion, Chopin should of course be played only on the piano. Transcriptions can be dangerous, but if you understand the soul of the composer's music, you can show its genius,



Photo: The Artists' Management Archives

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Chopin Society of Atlanta has grown a cult following among local piano mavens.

— Pierre Ruhe, *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, November, 2007

Students Awarded in Essay Contest

It has been our long-standing tradition to give free concert tickets for students attending Chopin Society of Atlanta concerts. In exchange, students write essays about the



Photo: Bozena U. Zaremba

performance to show the impact that the music has made on them. Authors of the best essays are awarded Barnes & Noble gift certificates, and excerpts are published in *Chopin Notes*. Here are selections from some of the award-winning essays by students who attended the CSA concert in March, featuring pianist Alberto Nosè.

Ingrid Cai

“Alberto Nosè is very talented and chose very hard pieces to play. Each piece had its own feeling, and Mr. Nosè expressed it; every sound was like a raindrop on a dry desert. Once heard, it is soaked up and the sound perishes in the ears of countless people. Every piece that was played by Alberto Nosè made a beautiful sound that echoed forever and everyone could enjoy the delicacy of the piece of music.... Mr. Nosè covers all emotions of the piece so the piece sounds wonderful. Not like others when you are pulled into the music for one second and then pushed away. Alberto Nosè keeps

you in the music until the piece is over.”

Varun Iyer

“I liked Prokofiev’s *Romeo and Juliet* because at that time I had just finished reading the story of Romeo and Juliet, written by William Shakespeare, in my language arts class. We even memorized a soliloquy of a certain character. The story was fresh in my mind, and I could relate it to the musical piece very well. When I heard Alberto Nosè play with so much involvement and perfection, I could imagine the whole story happening in m head.”

Gabby Banzon

“I liked *Ballade, Op. 52, No. 4* by Frederick Chopin most. I love listening to and playing ballades. Ballades are meant to tell a dramatic story, and Mr. Nosè told the story very well. He played with such great intensity and emotion that it made me feel like I was actually in the story. I loved everything about that piece, from powerful *fortes* to the legato *pianos*. I felt moved by this piece.”

Excerpts have been edited for space and clarity.



Photo: Bozena U. Zaremba

even on a different instrument. And this is what I am trying to accomplish.

Which is not easy since everyone has his or her own theory about how Chopin should be played.

Art is immeasurable. There is no one method, a golden key to playing his music. After all, who truly knows how to play Chopin? The world only knows the most famous renditions of the greatest pianists. Nobody has ever heard Chopin play. We can only imagine his intentions, especially that the music itself – through its dynamics, phrasing – suggests the character of the piece.

Talking about the dynamics, you have an incredible *piano*, which is so difficult to play.

I have to admit that *piano* is one of my fortes [laughs]. Anybody can play loud and fast.

Giovanni Casella is your regular accompanist. What do you appreciate in him most?

Giovanni is extremely alert. I have never felt more comfortable with any accompanist. We have known each other for years and understand each other without words. We work in a very similar way, too. We have reached the point when hours of practicing together are not necessary. Before the concert, the musician needs to rest and accumulate energy.

Let's talk about the Paganini Competition, which you won in 2001. Winning such a prestigious competition usually opens the doors to famous concert halls and recording studios. Did this happen with you?

Times have changed. A competition gives you a chance, gives you an interesting biography entry, but does not guarantee anything. Fifteen or twenty years ago, only a few violinists would enter a competition, so sometimes there were more prizes than participants. Today there are millions of great violinists and there are around 300 competitions each year. That is, in my opinion, far too many. Besides, the participants are judged not by soloists but teachers, who have not held an instrument in their hands for twenty or

thirty years. Let me give you an example: In times when the famous Vadim Repin won the Queen Elizabeth Competition in Brussels, the jury included such artists as David Oistrakh, Henryk Szeryng, Ruggiero Ricci and Ida Haendel. Each one knew exactly what it means to perform in front of the audience and how to cope with the adrenaline, but most of all, each one could go up on the stage and play any musical piece from the competition's



Photo: Marion Coers

repertoire – something that is so rare nowadays. It is easy to judge, to criticize, but to step on the stage and electrify the audience – only few can do this.

Then why was this competition so important?

The Paganini Competition is legendary, and not every violinist can bear its pressure. I am very proud of this award, especially that I am the only Polish violinist who has won this competition, though many have tried. I had dreamt of winning this competition since my school years.

Which violinist do you consider to be your mentor?

There are many. I have always been a great admirer of the old violinist school. The first artist I would bring up is

Michael Rabin, who played with a most beautiful, substantial sound, and with such an inhuman force. Then there is Josef Hassid, who died tragically so young. Someone said (I cannot remember who) that a great violinist comes around every 100 years, a Hassid every 200. Hassid played with so much passion and so much maturity, unusual for a young man. Of course, Jascha Heifetz has always been for me, just as for most violinists, a great example to follow. He was phenomenal. I learned timing from Henryk Szeryng. I must also mention Itzhak Perlman, whom I have always admired for his melancholy. When I think about the difference between the old and the new generation of violinists, I realize that the old ones could be instantly recognized after just few first notes, and now....?

What is the significance of the kind of the instrument you play?

None, really. There are two names associated with the violin that every violinist dreams of, i.e., Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesu and Antonio Stradivari. Why not dream? But even those instruments will not play by themselves. You need the soul and skillful hands.

You are a great fishing enthusiast. Where does this interest come from?

From my childhood. I remember summer nights that I spent with my older brother fishing. It was only a year ago that I returned to this hobby. And now I can even say that fishing takes as much of my time as music. I even have a double case, which instead of the second instrument can hold a folding fishing rod and small accessories necessary for spin fishing. Of course, not always is this possible.

What else nourishes your musical imagination?

The surrounding world and the path I follow. Every experience in my life has changed something in me, and thanks to that my music is more "saturated." Someone once told me, "Mariusz, remember that you are human first, then you are a man, and only in the third place, an artist. If you are not 'clean' as a human being, you will never play clean."

The artist's website: www.mariuszpatyra.com

Just for Kids...

A **nocturne** (from the French for "nocturnal" and the Latin *nocturnus*) is a musical composition that is inspired by, or evocative of, the night. Nocturnes are generally thought of as being tranquil, dreamy and meditative.

The first nocturnes written under this title were by the Irish composer John Field, who is generally considered to be the father of the Romantic nocturne. However, the most famous representative of the form was Frederick Chopin, who wrote 21 of them, the majority of which were written in an A-B-A form. While the A part is usually in a dreamy *bel canto* (Italian for "beautiful singing") style, the B part is more dramatic.

Transcription – "an arrangement of a musical composition for some instrument or voice other than the original" (Merriam Webster's Online Dictionary)

Many of Chopin's compositions have been transcribed for other instruments. For example, the Funeral March from his *Sonata in B-flat Minor* and many of his etudes, mazurkas and waltzes have been arranged for violin and piano. At our concert, Mariusz Patyra will play Chopin's *Nocturne in C-sharp Minor* arranged for the violin by Nathan Milstein. This transcription retains the melody of the original composition. The sound of the violin is often considered to be sad and nostalgic, which corresponds well to the reflective character of the nocturne.

Chopin's Life and Music Fifth Annual Atlanta Youth Chopin Competition

The Chopin Society of Atlanta will hold its Fifth Annual Atlanta Youth Chopin Competition, dedicated to Chopin's life and music. Our young audience members are invited to write an **essay or short story on the life and work of Frederick Chopin**.

The work should not exceed four standard typewritten pages of about 200 words per page and should be submitted by mail to the Chopin Society of Atlanta, 540 Morton Mill Court, Alpharetta, GA 30022, **by November 22, 2008**. Besides receiving our awards, all winning works will be submitted to the International Competition for a composition about Chopin's life and music announced by the International Federation of Chopin Societies in Warsaw, where an international jury will select the best three works for publication in *Chopin in the World*, a yearly journal edited by the federation.

For more information, please contact the Chopin Society of Atlanta at chopinsociety@mindspring.com. **Please let us know if you would like to be a sponsor or if you would like to establish a special award in your name.**

Details are on our website: www.chopinatlanta.org

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