



# SIR ANDRÁS SCHIFF

UMS Digital Presentation  
Hosted on UMS.org

Thursday Evening, April 8, 2021 at 7:30 (Digital Premiere)  
Streaming on demand through Sunday, April 18

Church of St. Peter  
Zurich, Switzerland

**THANK YOU TO SUPPORTERS OF THIS UMS DIGITAL  
PRESENTATION**

Supporting Sponsor

**ROBERT O. AND DARRAGH H. WEISMAN**

This digital presentation of Sir András Schiff is supported by Robert O. and Darragh H. Weisman. UMS also extends our gratitude to the University of Michigan for its partnership and support this season.

This digital recital was created by Hochuli Konzert AG, producer, in cooperation with Hochrhein Musikfestival Productions; Johannes Bachmann, film director; and Joel Cromier, sound engineer.

Sir András Schiff's recordings are available on the Decca/London, Teldec/Warner, and ECM labels.

Sir András Schiff appears by arrangement with Kirshbaum Associates Inc., New York, NY.

## **PROGRAM**

*Johann Sebastian Bach*

### **Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue in d minor, BWV 903**

*Ludwig van Beethoven*

### **Piano Sonata No. 17 in d minor Op. 31 No. 2**

Largo — Allegro

Adagio

Allegretto

*Bach*

### **Capriccio in B-flat Major, BWV 992**

Arioso: Adagio — “Friends Gather & Try to Dissuade Him from Departing”  
(Andante) — “They Picture the Dangers Which May Befall Him”

Adagiosissimo — “The Friends’ Lament”

(Andante con moto) — “Since He Cannot Be Dissuaded, They Say Farewell”

Allegro poco — “Aria of the Postilion”

“Fugue in Imitation of the Postilion’s Horn”

*Beethoven*

### **Piano Sonata No. 26 in E-flat Major, Op. 81a**

Adagio — Allegro (Les Adieux)

Andante espressivo (L’absence)

Vivacissimamente (Le Retour)

*Robert Schumann*

### **Arabeske in C Major, Op. 18**

## CHROMATIC FANTASIA AND FUGUE IN D MINOR, BWV 903

### CAPRICCIO IN B-FLAT MAJOR, BWV 992 (“ON THE DEPARTURE OF A MOST BELOVED BROTHER”)

Johann Sebastian Bach

*Born March 21, 1685 in Eisenach, Germany*

*Died July 28, 1750 in Leipzig*

UMS premieres: *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue* on December 11, 1888 by pianist Louis Maas at Hobert Hall; *Capriccio in B-flat Major* on March 2, 1915 by pianist Ferruccio Busoni at Hill Auditorium.

Each of these two works is unique in Bach’s enormous output — and each is unique for a different reason. The bold dissonances and unexpected dramatic outbursts of the *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue* show Bach at his unruliest, while the *Capriccio* is the only piece of instrumental program music he ever wrote. It was the only time he told a story entirely without words, and he made this fact explicit in verbal titles appended to the work’s various sections.

It is impossible to tell when the *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue* was composed as there is no surviving autograph. Most experts believe that the work dates from Bach’s Köthen years (1717–1723) — a period when Bach wrote only instrumental music. Stylistically related to Bach’s earlier organ toccatas, this work surpasses them all in the extravagance of the writing. The *Fantasia* opens with rapid scales interrupted by sudden rests, followed by a great deal of cascading passagework, agitated *arpeggios* (broken chords) and emotionally intense recitatives in free rhythm. All these musical elements make extensive use of the chromatic scale: all 12 half-steps of the scale are constantly in use, resulting in

frequent key changes and a high

degree of harmonic instability. The fugue is similarly chromatic and extremely adventurous in its design. Its theme is unusually long — a full eight-bar musical phrase upon which Bach constructed a monumental musical edifice. The work culminates in a series of thundering octaves in the left hand, of the kind one would expect to find in Romantic piano music rather than in a work by Bach.

The *Capriccio on the Departure of a Beloved Brother* is an early work, composed when Bach was in his late teens. According to a traditional story that has been recently challenged if not completely refuted, the “beloved brother” was Johann Jacob Bach, three years Sebastian’s senior, who entered the service of the King of Sweden as a musician in 1704. Originally titled in faulty Italian (*Capriccio sopra la lontananza de il fratro diletissimo*), the work consists of six sections, each given a programmatic title (in German this time) to describe the various events surrounding the departure.

At the beginning, the “Friends Gather & Try to Dissuade Him from Departing” is expressed through a heartfelt *arioso* that keeps insistently

repeating the same motif. A torturous fugue, constantly modulating into foreign tonalities (and ending far away from the home key) represents the friends as they “Picture the Dangers Which May Befall Him” abroad. “The Friends’ Lament” takes the form of a *passacaglia* (variations on a ground bass), the form in which laments were frequently written in the Baroque era. (As it happened, Bach never saw his brother Jakob again.) In “Since He Cannot Be Dissuaded, They Say Farewell,” the music, after many adventurous modulations, manages to end in a reassuring major key.

The music now takes on a more cheerful character with the “Aria of the Postilion” or post-coach driver, in which the repeated octave leaps anticipate the “postilion horn” motif that will play an important part in the final fugue, “In Imitation of the Postilion’s Horn.” A true contrapuntal tour de force, it combines two different horn signals, showing that Bach, not yet 20, was already a consummate master of polyphonic composition.

*Program note by Peter Laki*

**PIANO SONATA NO. 17 IN D MINOR OP. 31 NO. 2  
("THE TEMPEST") (1802)**

**PIANO SONATA NO. 26 IN E-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 81A  
("LES ADIEUX") (1809–10)**

Ludwig van Beethoven

*Born December 16 or 17, 1770 in Bonn, Germany*

*Died March 26, 1827 in Vienna*

UMS premieres: *Sonata No. 17* on February 1, 1883 by pianist William H. Sherwood at the General Lecture Room on the campus of University of Michigan; *Sonata No. 26* on October 18, 1907 by pianist Jan Sicksesz at University Hall.

In 2006, Sir András Schiff did a series of lecture recitals at Wigmore Hall focused on Beethoven's Piano Sonatas, including the two on this program. Listen to his explorations of these two Sonatas via the following links:

[Piano Sonata No. 17 in d minor Op. 31 No. 2](#)

[Piano Sonata No. 26 in E-flat Major, Op. 81a](#)

## ARABESKE IN C MAJOR, OP. 18

Robert Schumann

*Born June 8, 1810 in Zwickau, Saxony*

*Died July 29, 1856 in Edenich*

UMS premiere: April 19, 1883 by pianist Louis Maas at the General Lecture Room on the campus of University of Michigan.

Had Schumann not injured his hand permanently by the ill-advised use of a dubious finger-stretching contraption, he might have become one of the 19th century's great pianist-composers, like his admired contemporary, Frederic Chopin. The young Schumann was certainly preparing for a similar career, practicing long hours and writing virtuoso piano music he was hoping to perform. By 1832, he knew that his virtuoso days were over, but the piano remained very close to his heart. So did pianists: he first fell in love with Ernestine von Fricken, who, like Schumann himself, was studying with the famous Leipzig teacher Friedrich Wieck. He later broke off their engagement for the sake of young Clara Wieck, his teacher's daughter who eventually became his wife and one of the greatest pianists of the century.

No wonder, then, that Schumann's creative output was largely limited to piano works until about 1840. As one commentator put it, "he turned to the piano as others do to a diary, confiding to it all the innermost secrets of his emotional life." And Schumann's emotional life was exceptionally rich and intense. In addition to his feelings for Ernestine and Clara, he was passionate about literature and the visual arts, and

convinced that artists have a sacred mission in the world. All this found expression in Schumann's piano music one of the summits of the keyboard literature.

The seemingly simple *Arabeske* captures something of the essence of Romantic art. The title refers to exotic ornamental patterns. Friedrich Schlegel, an influential philosopher whom Schumann held in high esteem, used the term extensively to describe an "artistically ordered confusion, a charming symmetry of contradictions...." Another contemporary, the artist Philipp Otto Runge, created "arabesques" in the form of elaborate ornamental designs, where a multitude of disparate elements were organized into coherent symmetrical patterns.

Schumann did something similar in music: his *Arabeske* is built from an extremely simple motif whose repeats and variations result in a complex, yet symmetrical musical structure. Even on the printed page, the main theme looks like an "arabesque," with the middle voice divided between the right-hand and the left-hand systems, and the note stems reaching upwards and then downwards. Those stems can be seen almost like ornamental lines on the page.

The piece is in rondo form; the main theme in C Major alternates with two episodes, one in e minor

and the other a minor. A final surprise awaits at the end when, instead of closing with the final return of the rondo theme, Schumann appended a dreamy epilog in a slow tempo. There he quotes the movement “The Poet Speaks” from his own *Kinderszenen* (Childhood Scenes, Op. 15), and the whole epilog is very much like the piano postlude from his later song cycle *Dichterliebe* (Poet’s Love). Thus, the conclusion is a poetic gesture that places the whole piece in a new perspective: the artist meditates on what he has just created, and the listener likewise muses on what they have just heard.

*Program note by Peter Laki*

## ARTISTS

**Sir András Schiff** is world-renowned as a pianist, conductor, pedagogue, and lecturer. Music critics and audiences alike continue to be inspired by the masterful and intellectual approach he brings to each masterpiece he performs. Born in Budapest, Hungary, in 1953, Sir András studied piano at the Liszt Ferenc Academy with Pál Kadosa, György Kurtág, and Ferenc Rados; and in London with George Malcolm. Recitals and special cycles, including the complete works of Bach, Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert, and Bartók constitute an important component of his work. Having collaborated with the world's leading orchestras and conductors, he now focuses primarily on solo recitals, performance-conducting appearances, and exclusive conducting projects.

During his Fall 2019 tour of North America, Sir András conducted and played with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Orchestre Symphonique de Montreal, pairing concerti by Bach, Beethoven, and Haydn with Brahms' "Variations on a theme by Haydn" and Bartok's "Dance Suite." He was joined by violinist Yuuko Shiokawa for an all-Mozart program opening New York's 92nd Street Y season.

Vicenza is home to Cappella Andrea Barca — his own chamber orchestra consisting of international soloists, chamber musicians, and friends, founded in 1999. Together they have appeared at Carnegie Hall, the Lucerne Festival, and the Salzburg Mozartwoche. Forthcoming projects include a tour of Asia and a cycle of Bach's keyboard concertos in Europe. Sir András enjoys close relationships with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, the Budapest Festival Orchestra, and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment (OAE).

In 2018 he accepted the role of associate artist with the OAE, complementing his interest in performing on period keyboard instruments.

He has established a prolific discography; since 1997 he has been an exclusive artist for ECM New Series and its producer, Manfred Eicher. Highlights have included the complete Beethoven Piano Sonatas recorded live in Zurich, solo recitals of Schubert, Schumann, and Janáček, as well as J. S. Bach's Partitas, Goldberg Variations, and *Well-Tempered Clavier*. His most recent two-disc set of Schubert Sonatas and Impromptus was released in Spring 2019.

He continues to support new talent, primarily through his "Building Bridges" series, which gives performance opportunities to promising young artists. He also teaches at the Barenboim-Said and Kronberg academies and gives frequent lectures and masterclasses. In 2017, his book *Music Comes from Silence*, a compilation of essays and conversations with Martin Meyer, was published by Barenreiter and Henschel.

Sir András Schiff's many honors include the international Mozarteum Foundation's Gold Medal (2012), Germany's Great Cross of Merit with Star (2012), the Royal Philharmonic Society's Gold Medal (2013), a Knighthood for Services to Music (2014), and a Doctorate from the Royal College of Music (2018).

## **UMS ARCHIVES**

This digital presentation marks Sir András Schiff's 15th appearance under UMS auspices following his UMS debut in October 1998 at Hill Auditorium as piano soloist with the Budapest Festival Orchestra under the baton of Iván Fischer.