

1987th Concert

December 16, 1990

OSCAR SHUMSKY, *violinist*

William Wolfram, *pianist*

PROGRAM

"In Appreciation of Fritz Kreisler"

Corelli-Kreisler	La Folia
Franz Schubert	Rondeau brillant
(1797-1828)	Opus 70 (1826)
Ludwig van Beethoven	Sonata in C Minor
(1770-1827)	Opus 30, No. 2 (1801-02)
	Allegro con brio
	Adagio cantabile
	Scherzo: Allegro
	Finale: Allegro

INTERMISSION

(*Twelve minutes*)

Fritz Kreisler, "in the style of . . ."

Pugnani	Praeludium and Allegro
Couperin	Chanson Louis XIII et pavane
Boccherini	Allegretto
Francoeur	Sicilienne et rigaudon
Pugnani	Tempo di menuetto
Fritz Kreisler	Cavatina
(1875-1962)	Gypsy Caprice
Mozart-Kreisler	Rondo

During his child-prodigy days, OSCAR SHUMSKY was singled out by none other than Leopold Stokowski as "the most astonishing genius I have ever heard." Acknowledged to this day by his peers as one of the world's greatest violinists, he recently drew praise from the Boston Globe as "something rare, valuable and irreplaceable." A self-effacing artist, he has never pursued a high profile career, but string players and lovers of the violin throughout the world know of his artistry and make it a point to attend whenever he makes one of his rare appearances.

"In Appreciation of Fritz Kreisler": A Glimpse of Yesteryear

(Notes by Oscar Shumsky)

Above all else Fritz Kreisler was a superb communicator and a consummate master of the short form of composition we have come to know as the "miniature". It is an unfortunate commentary on our time that a fashionable snobbism sees fit to demean this important category of music and to dismiss its output as trivia or encore pieces only. This makes little real sense, as quality has little to do with size. A Schubert *Lied* may have as significant a message as a lengthy symphony by the same master. Indeed, there are some who would argue that the "heavenly length" is oft more "lengthy" than "heavenly."

It is my personal view – one shared by many – that the demise of the violin recital, as we once knew it, is due in large part to the disappearance of the "miniatures". Instead we have *Sonaten-Abende*, one-composer fests, etc., which, valuable though they may well be, have supplanted the old recital format, but have not replaced it in our hearts.

In the days of my early childhood, I was often brought to hear Kreisler's annual violin recitals, performed on Saturday afternoons at the Philadelphia Academy of Music. To this day, the wonderful sound of his tone rings in my ears; his aristocratic style and his noble demeanor were equally unforgettable. He instantly became a dominant influence in my violinistic life.

The format of violin recitals in that period was quite different from what it is now. A baroque or Renaissance sonata, perhaps followed by a sonata of Beethoven or Brahms, and a violin concerto would be performed, using a piano reduction in place of the orchestra. No one seemed to mind, not even the seasoned musicians; all were intent on hearing these favorite masterpieces. After the intermission of Kreisler's concerts, the program would be devoted to the "minatures." Many of these were Kreisler's own compositions, which appeared in the program under the name of the composer whose style he had copied. Later, when the real authorship of the pieces became public knowledge, he used the phrase, "In the style of . . .," before each attribution. At the program's end, the audience would eagerly await their favorite encores. Almost always, as soon as the listeners recognized the opening strain, a burst of applause would break out. I don't ever remember hearing the second and third measures of *Caprice Viennoise* or *Liebesfreud* on such occasions!

It has long been my desire to reconstruct a program such as I often heard in the 1920's and '30's. This program may be considered typical of the ones that Fritz Kreisler performed, and is presented in the hope that concertgoing may again be as it once was: far more fun and far less over-burdened with righteousness.