

the piano sparkles with bravura passages.

Brahms composed his first violin sonata during summer vacations in 1878 and 1879, in Pörschach, Carinthia. In the opening movement (*Vivace non troppo*) a three-note motivic figure is introduced by the violin. This motive is organic to the structure of the entire sonata, as it appears in the second and third movements. It is somewhat disguised in the third movement, where it appears as a four-note theme. The appealing charm of the movement is heightened by Brahms' judicious use of one of his most glorious *cantabile* melodies. The second movement (*Adagio*) unfolds in tripartite form with a marked contrast between the introspective, visionary first part and the agitated second part. The third part summarizes with a return to material from the beginning of the movement, while at the same time featuring a cameo appearance of material from the second part. The finale (*Allegro molto moderato*) is a rondo that borrows a melody from Brahms' *Regenlied (Rain Song), Op. 59, No. 3*, and closes the sonata with a refined coda.

It was a performance of a Bach sonata by the eminent Hungarian-born American violinist Joseph Szigeti (1892–1973) that inspired Eugene Ysaÿe to write his own set of solo sonatas. His *Six Sonatas for Solo Violin* are not widely performed or extensively recorded. They are, however, in the words of music critic Richard Freed, "works [that] not only exploit the resources of the violin most eloquently, but [in addition] express the great-hearted artist's specific admiration and affection for six of his distinguished younger colleagues." The first sonata follows the pattern of the *sonata da chiesa*, or church sonata, that Bach adapted for his violin sonatas. The pattern consists of four movements with tempos alternating between slow and fast.

Being a professional violinist as well as a violist, Ottorino Respighi knew well the violin's capabilities and possibilities. His compositional mentors were Giuseppe Martucci, Max Bruch, and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. To this list of mentors must be added Johannes Brahms, who did not personally tutor Respighi but whose compositional influence is evident. As Joseph Braustein illustrates in his critique of a performance of the work: "The sonata... betrays the marked influence of Brahms by virtue of its metrical and rhythmical irregularities: 3/4, 2/4, 9/8, and 7/8 meters follow each other measure by measure. This also occurs in the very expressive lyrical middle movement, which is characterized by constantly fluctuating harmonies. The last movement is a *passacaglia* that was evidently inspired by the finale of Brahms' *Fourth Symphony*."

Program notes by Elmer Booze

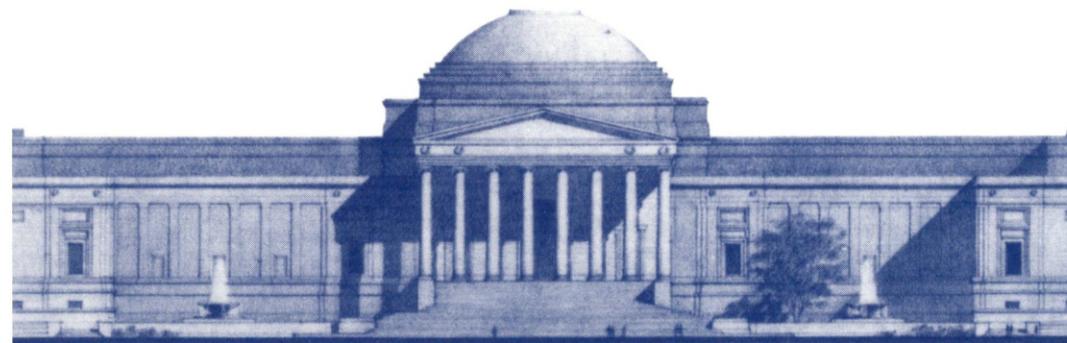
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MENG-CHIEH LIU, pianist

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Seven O'clock
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