

1990th Concert

January 6, 1991

ANN SCHEIN, pianist

PROGRAM

Ludwig van Beethoven Sonata in E-flat Major
(1770-1827) Opus 81a (1809)

Adagio-Allegro (Les adieux)
Andante espressivo (L'absence)
Vivacissimamente (Le retour)

Franz Schubert Two Impromptus, Opus 90
(1797-1828) (1827)

No. 3 in G-flat Major
No. 2 in E-flat Major

Sergey Prokofiev Sonata No. 3 in A Minor
(1891-1953) Opus 28 (1917)

INTERMISSION
(Twelve Minutes)

Frédéric Chopin Polonaise-Fantaisie in A-flat Major
(1810-1849) Opus 61 (1846)

Four Etudes
Opus 10, No. 10, in A-flat Major
Opus 10, No. 4, in C-sharp Minor
Opus 10, No. 8, in F Major
Opus 25, No. 12, in C Minor

Ballade No. 4 in F Minor
Opus 52 (1843)

Tonight the National Gallery is pleased to be continuing its 50th anniversary concert season with a return engagement by pianist ANN SCHEIN, who spent her childhood in Washington and studied piano with Washington Times-Herald music critic Glenn Dillard Dunn and his wife. Already at 13, she was commuting to Baltimore to study under the great Mieczyslaw Munz at the Peabody Conservatory. Miss Schein first played at the National Gallery in September of 1958. Her appearance at the Gallery preceded by one year

her widely hailed recording debut, when Kapp Records introduced a selection of recordings featuring her interpretations of a wide range of romantic piano repertoire. Since then, Miss Schein has had an illustrious career ranging from a series of six concerts at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall to ten worldwide tours under U.S. State Department auspices. She is also active in many volunteer organizations, including serving as president of the People-to-People Music Committee, which raises funds for musical instruments for symphony orchestras in disaster-struck areas. She is a member of the faculty of the Peabody Conservatory of Music and the Aspen Music Festival.

A great many of the Beethoven sonatas bear a nickname which was attached by publishers or interpreters after the fact, but in the case of the *Sonata, Opus 81a*, the nickname "Les adieux" comes from the composer's own subtitle of the first movement. Beethoven wrote the work in May of 1809, having just experienced the trauma of the French siege of Vienna and the flight of the Austrian royal family into temporary exile. The dedication of the sonata to the Archduke Rudolf and the subtitling of the movements reflect Beethoven's attachment to the Archduke, who was a former pupil and sometime patron. While the first movement wishes him farewell and the second poignantly mourns his absence, the third expresses the composer's hope for his safe return.

The title *Impromptu* suggests a piece which has the nature of an improvisation, but Schubert's pieces in this form adhere by and large to a consistent three-part structure. It is likely that he chose to call these pieces *impromptus* because they were written on a sudden inspiration, rather than having been contemplated in response to a commission or some other stimulus.

Prokofiev's journey as a composer may be described as a search for new ways to express freedom from nineteenth-century conventions in music, which was profoundly and permanently altered by the strictures placed upon him during the period when Stalinism dominated Soviet thought and culture. The *Sonata in A Minor* was written in 1907, when Prokofiev's imaginative spirit was at its peak and iconoclasm in music was not only allowed but very much in vogue. The one-movement work, in itself an innovation as a form for a sonata, is bursting with energy, enthusiasm and dramatic passion, while maintaining a consistently clear texture.

The classic *polonaise* was a dance of noble dignity and moderately fast tempo which had been in existence for several hundred years before Chopin immortalized it in his *polonaises* for piano solo. For him and for his listeners it became a symbol of Polish nationalism, and the emotionalism attached to Polish issues in the 1830's was one of the factors contributing to his early rise to fame throughout Europe. The *Polonaise-Fantaisie*, Opus 61, is Chopin's last work in this form, and it is a fitting climax to his life's output of patriotic music. It rises to heights of rhythmic drive and lyrical intensity which are rarely matched in his own or any other piano music.