

# ANDREW RANGELL

## FIVE SONATAS

### Ernesto Halffter

(1905-1989)

**Sonata per Pianoforte** (1926-32) (8:30)

**1** Allegro giusto ed energico

### George Enescu

(1881-1955)

**Sonata in F sharp minor, Op. 24, No. 1** (1924) (24:34)

**2** Allegro molto moderato e grave (10:51)

**3** Presto vivace (4:37)

**4** Andante molto espressivo (9:06)

### Igor Stravinsky

(1882-1971)

**Sonata** (1924) (11:09)

**5** ♩ = 112 (3:19)

**6** Adagietto (4:55)

**7** ♩ = 112 (2:55)

### Ernesto Halffter

**Sonata: "Homenaje a Domenico Scarlatti"** (1985) (7:43)

**8** Allegramente mosso

### Leoš Janáček

(1854-1928)

**Sonata - "Oct. 1, 1905"** (1905) (11:43)

**9** Foreboding (6:01)

**10** Death (5:42)

HALFFTER: *Sonata per pianoforte* (1926-32)

*Sonate – Homenaje a Domenico Scarlatti* (1985)

Ernesto Halffter, a native of Madrid (the name is of Austrian origin), came from a musically accomplished family. His older brother Rodolfo was to become a well-recognized composer in Mexico, where he emigrated in 1939. When as a teenager Ernesto became a pupil of Falla, a lifelong friendship was the result. By his early 20's Halffter was already acclaimed in Spain both as a composer and as a conductor. His output for piano, spanning six decades, consists mostly of varied and beautifully crafted character pieces and dances. Interestingly, for sheer enterprise and ingenuity of design, Halffter never surpassed his very early sonata, begun when he was 21. (We may wonder why it took him six years to do the job – started in Madrid, completed in Paris – but the results speak for themselves.) The entire piece is saturated with materials presented in the very first measure. Three distinct themes, deftly connected, appear in the exposition, whose motoric and spiky counterpoint has a distinct Stravinsky-like feel, as does the sudden cadence to B major at the end of the first section. A surprising and steeply building fughetta marks the beginning of an unusually extended and transformative development section. Its second segment features a dramatic new interlude in B minor – overtly Spanish in its themes, textures and rhythms – which seems to come from nowhere. But in fact its material derives clearly from the sonata's opening. It is a wonderful stroke, pure “duende”. Finally the recapitulation, very grand in arrival and powerfully condensed, brings the work to an impressive conclusion.

At 80 Halffter delivered a second one-movement piano sonata, a confection in honor of Scarlatti. Halffter's very early “Danza de la Pastora”, a sparkling jeu d'esprit in binary form, tantalized in its resemblance to Scarlatti. But this late

piano sonata, mimicking the older master in certain particulars (the binary form, its tonal axis, and Scarlatti's characteristic phrase repetitions and interruptions) – then achieves something completely new! A la Stravinsky. Clearly, the trick is in Halffter's harmonic language, a brilliant compound of Spanish dissonance and French fluency. (One hears traces of Poulenc, Ravel, Debussy, and, in the pared-down second theme, even a touch of ... Scarlatti!) Ingeniously Halffter provides miniature introductions and codas marking each new section (and framing the events of each). The final coda of this spirited and, at times, frothy work is formal, Spanish, even tragic. And thus the curtain falls.

ENESCU: *Sonata in F sharp minor, Op. 24, no. 1*

In his lifetime George Enescu was best known as one of the pre-eminent violinists of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and as the mentor of Yehudi Menuhin. He was also a concert-level pianist and an internationally active conductor. His greatest gift to the world may well prove to be the body of music he created – its depth and importance even now have not been fully fathomed. Enescu's mature chamber works and four-act opera “Oedipe” form the primary basis for his reputation as a composer. But he wrote much for solo piano, more than any other composer here represented. The F sharp minor sonata (the first of two major sonatas) was written during the summer of 1924 and dedicated to the Swiss pianist Emil Frey. Enescu himself first performed the work in Bucharest (1925) and Paris (1926).

The first movement, lengthy and complex, is in sonata form, its larger sections clearly demarcated. The opening twelve bars present two core ideas: first a somber eight-bar Passacaglia-like statement, in three-octave unison; then an answering (one might say “questioning”) four-bar theme in the left hand. From this

moment on, a perpetual process of development and interaction of these two figures confronts the listener, dramatic changes of texture and polyphony occurring in every section. Enescu's use of the piano, clearly French in influence, is nonetheless absolutely personal and everywhere richly expressive. Found frequently in details of harmony and melody are fleeting evocations of Romanian folk-music. And then quite unexpectedly (following an intense and truncated recapitulation) an entire little Romanian dance, graceful and gentle, appears – and is gone! A coda which builds from the mysterious to the ferocious (as did the earlier, much larger, development section) brings the movement to a roar of intensity before its memorable disintegration.

The remaining movements are shorter but, by design, more focused in profile and purpose. The presto vivace is a wild scherzo, its rondo form unruly to say the least. Metric dislocations abound, my favorite being the tiny surprising 5/4 episode embedded near the end. Many key areas are broached in passing – but the tonic key is B flat, a fact finally, and rudely, left in no doubt whatsoever. But Enescu concludes this sonata (as Ives did his “Concord”) with the ethereal and mystical rather than the overpowering. The finale is a nocturne, impressionist in palette, Romanian in atmosphere – with sounding bells, floating melodic fragments, wandering inner voices, delicate webs of sound, quietly scintillating glissandi (on both the white and black keys) and at the end, over an F sharp pedal, an ecstatically luxuriant haze of chromaticism. There are, I think, few more important or beautiful piano sonatas from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

#### STRAVINSKY: *Sonate* (1924)

In the mid 1920's Stravinsky composed three piano works – the Concerto

(with wind instruments), the Serenade in A, and the Sonata – which are often cited as representative of his “neo-classical” period. (Or “neo-baroque”. The two terms have been used practically synonymously.) The sonata, in particular, is spare in texture, modest in scale, devoid of conventional virtuosity, and also (like the physical specimen of the composer himself in 1924) taut, wiry, and buzzing with energy! It was in fact created as a vehicle, a small but potent calling card, for Stravinsky's own use while on tour. Its movements are written almost entirely in two and three part counterpoint, and suggest the symmetric structures of baroque concerto form. (Stravinsky claimed to have been studying Beethoven's piano sonatas at this time. Hmm. The Adagio grazioso from Op.31, No. 1, with its peculiar stratified texture and comic outlook, does come to mind as a possible model for Stravinsky's Adagietto movement.)

The first movement (an allegro, marked only  $\text{♩} = 112$ ) veers between two musics in motion: the twisting chromaticism of the opening unison statement, and the diatonic main theme, with its parallel triads and buoyant supporting broken chords. The metrical changes are constant and sometimes jazzy, and the harmony full of casual surprises. A deadpan final cadence (a formality repeated in both outer movements) is another such surprise.

The Adagietto movement, with its embroidered flights of melody over carefully controlled supporting polyphony, has always reminded me somewhat of the sublime slow movement of Bach's Italian Concerto. But, as mentioned above, Beethoven's Op. 31, No. 1 may be the more likely model. The result, as in the Beethoven slow movement, is a blend of wicked parody and compelling grace and beauty. The elaborate, long-deferred final cadence furnishes (for me) a droll, very satisfying conclusion.

Similar in texture and spirit to the first movement, the third is in duple

rather than triple meter, and a little more varied in texture. Its “stealth” recapitulation catches us unprepared – but a more important recapitulation is in store: a final reference to the sonata’s mysterious opening, which brings the short movement to a perfect quiet close.

JANÁČEK: *Sonata, “Oct. 1, 1905”*

The Czech composer was 51, and still some years away from international fame, when he produced a sonata in three movements – his only keyboard work in this form. The piece was written in anguished response to events in Brno during 1905, when that capital city was under Austro-Hungarian rule. In the midst of a large street demonstration in favor of the establishment of a Czech University in the city, an unarmed worker was murdered by the imperial troops. The date was Oct. 1, 1905. The sonata (also subtitled “From the Streets”) was apparently viewed by Janáček with extremely mixed feelings. The composer first destroyed one movement (the finale) and later rid himself of the other two, but these were secretly copied by the pianist entrusted to perform the piece, Ludmila Tučková. It is, I think, noteworthy that the two present movements (both in E flat minor) seem to forge a profound unity by themselves.

The first movement – a highly compressed sonata-form – is introduced by a plaintive recitative-like theme interrupted by sudden punctuations. This latter figure (characteristically for Janáček) soon saturates the texture and tone of the entire movement, whose quiet lyrical moments (second theme-group) seem to have hardly enough room to breathe. This beautiful doom-laden movement ends only after a final choked eruption of violence.

What follows is a halting, grief-stricken processional – characterized by

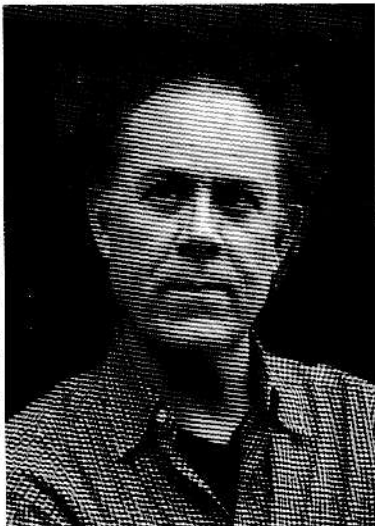
obsessively repeated rhythms and unison melodic fragments. It has the feeling of ritual, and behaves like a sonata form with a single idea. The development section introduces a short subsidiary figure which grows into an almost overwhelming presence (as we saw in the first movement). The recapitulation, following a tremendous build-up, is explosive but brief. In a few moments the movement is over.

Born in Chicago and raised in Colorado, **Andrew Rangell** is a graduate of the Juilliard School, earning a doctoral degree in piano under Beveridge Webster. He made his New York debut as winner of the Malraux Award of the Concert Artists Guild and has since performed throughout the United States, Europe and Israel. From 1977 to 1985 he was resident artist and principal piano instructor at Dartmouth College, and a frequent guest with many of New England’s foremost performing groups and festivals. Mr. Rangell’s recital repertoire has reflected a breadth of interest and affinity. From 1984 to 1985, he gave a five-concert series of Bach programs at Boston’s Gardner Museum which included keyboard concertos, the Six Partitas and the *Goldberg Variations*. His many New York recitals have included works from all periods, from Orlando Gibbons and Johann Froberger to Luciano Berio, Carl Nielsen, Arnold Schoenberg, George Enescu, and the two epic Sonatas of Charles Ives. Mr. Rangell’s gifts as an extraordinary interpreter of Beethoven received high acclaim during three successive seasons (1986-89) devoted to the performance, in a seven-concert sequence, of the thirty-two Beethoven piano sonatas. This period saw ten traversals of the complete cycle (including Boston presentations at both Sanders Theater and Jordan Hall, both Sanders Theater and Jordan Hall, and at New York’s 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y) as well as a debut at Lincoln Center’s Mostly Mozart Festival and the award of an Avery Fisher

Career Grant. Of Mr. Rangell's most recent New York recital, Charles Michener of the *New York Observer* wrote: "For me, the great discovery of the series has been Andrew Rangell . . . Mr. Rangell is an individualist. And such was his intensity—like the late Glenn Gould, he seemed to be propelled by an irresistible force—that the listener's attention was riveted to the music."

Andrew Rangell's extensive discography on the Dorian label includes Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, Beethoven's final five sonatas, two diverse collections entitled "A Recital of Intimate Works" (Vol. I & II), and a pairing of Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations* and Ravel's *Gaspard de la Nuit*. A two-disc set of Bach's six Partitas released in November, 2001 was cited in both *The Boston Globe* and *Boston Phoenix* as one of the 'Best recordings of 2001.' Mr. Rangell's performances of the complete Chopin *Mazurkas* joined the Dorian catalogue in 2003 and were characterized, in *Gramophone*, as "taking the humble mazurka to new heights of variety and sophistication."

1998-99 marked Andrew Rangell's first active concert season following a long hiatus due to a serious hand injury. Since that time he has steadily reclaimed and expanded his performance and recording career. Mr. Rangell was honored to perform a solo recital in the 2003 Venice "Biennale," Italy's foremost contemporary music festival. In 2006 Mr. Rangell's children's book, *Sammy Snake's Lucky Day*, will be published in Paris.



Producer: Andrew Rangell  
Engineer: Thomas Stephenson  
Editor: Matthew Packwood  
Piano Technician: Anthony McKenna  
Photographs of Andrew Rangell: Ed Prenowitz  
Graphic Design: Alexis Napoliello  
Album Coordinator: Ashley Arrington

Recorded at the Gardner Museum, Boston, September 2005.  
Hamburg Steinway, D

Special Thanks to Ed, Gina, David, Genie, and Joan Provencal of the Gardner Museum.

Executive Producers: Becky Starobin and David Starobin  
For Bridge Records: Ashley Arrington, Alexis Napoliello, Brad Napoliello,  
and Robert Starobin

**Bridge Records, Inc.**

200 Clinton Avenue · New Rochelle, NY · 10801

**For information about Bridge releases and to join our mailing list:**

Email: [Bridgeec@bridgerecords.com](mailto:Bridgeec@bridgerecords.com) · [www.BridgeRecords.com](http://www.BridgeRecords.com)

Robert Starobin, webmaster

**Andrew Rangell plays Schubert**

*Moments Musicaux, Sonata in B-flat, D. 960*

**BRIDGE 9153**

**Andrew Rangell: Peruvian Honeymoon**

Music of Chopin, Wolff, Mozart, Valen, Haydn and Stravinsky

**BRIDGE 9154**

**Andrew Rangell plays J.S. Bach**

*French Overture in B-minor, BWV 831; Little Preludes, BWV 942, 936*

*Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue, BWV 903; Praeludium, BWV 902*

*Italian Concerto, BWV 971*

**BRIDGE 9180**

**Andrew Rangell plays Beethoven**

*Sonata No. 10, G Major, Op. 14, No. 2; Sonata No. 17, D minor, Op. 31, No. 2 ("Tempest")*

*Sonata No. 24, F sharp Major, Op. 78; Sonata No. 9, E Major, Op. 14, No. 1*

*Sonata No. 27, E minor, Op. 90*

**BRIDGE 9181**

