



# Mitsuko Uchida

Friday Evening, March 24, 2017 at 8:00  
Hill Auditorium  
Ann Arbor

50th Performance of the 138th Annual Season  
138th Annual Choral Union Series

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Ms. Uchida records exclusively for Decca.

Ms. Uchida appears by arrangement with Arts Management Group, Inc.

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The photography, sound recording, or videotaping of this performance is prohibited.

## PROGRAM

*Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*

### **Piano Sonata in C Major, K. 545**

Allegro

Andante

Rondo – Allegretto

*Robert Schumann*

### **Kreisleriana, Op. 16**

Ausserst bewegt

Sehr innig und nicht zu rasch

Sehr aufgeregt

Sehr langsam

Sehr lebhaft

Sehr langsam

Sehr rasch

Schnell und spielend

## **Intermission**

*Jörg Widmann*

### **Sonatina facile**

Allegro

Andante

Rondo

*US premiere*

*R. Schumann*

### **Fantasy in C Major, Op. 17**

Durchaus phantastisch und leidenschaftlich vorzutragen

Mässig: Durchaus energisch

Langsam getragen: Durchweg leise zu halten

## PIANO SONATA IN C MAJOR, K. 545 “SONATA FACILE” (1788)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Born January 27, 1756 in Salzburg

Died December 5, 1791 in Vienna

UMS premiere: András Schiff; February 2016 in Hill Auditorium.

### Snapshots of History...In 1788:

- The first edition of *The Times*, previously *The Daily Universal Register*, is published in London
- Day of the Tiles occurs in France, which some consider the beginning of the French Revolution
- American pioneers establish the town of Marietta (in modern-day Ohio), the first permanent American settlement outside the original Thirteen Colonies

This sonata has acquired the nickname *facile* (easy) because its technical demands are rather modest, and many students can get through it reasonably well after only a few years of study. (Mozart himself, when he entered the piece in his catalog on June 26, 1788, noted that it was “for beginners”). Yet when we hear the sonata performed by a master, we realize that in Mozart, simple doesn’t mean primitive and what is easy is never unsubstantial. This sonata is a product of Mozart’s highest maturity, a close contemporary of the last three

symphonies. In those final years of his short life, Mozart did nothing out of routine; every piece represented a fresh start and a new challenge.

In the “Sonata facile,” the challenge consisted in providing a model of clarity and concision, demonstrating the essence of what a sonata was — a lesson for aspiring composers and pianists alike. The three movements flow effortlessly, melody after graceful melody, not requiring a lot of explanation but giving great pleasure even at the 100th hearing.

## KREISLERIANA, OP. 16 (1838)

Robert Schumann

Born June 8, 1810 in Zwickau, Germany

Died July 29, 1856 in Eendenich, near Bonn, Germany

UMS premiere: William H. Sherwood; February 1883 in a General Lecture Room.

### Snapshots of History...In 1838:

- The people of the Cherokee Nation are forcibly relocated during The Trail of Tears in the US
- Coronation of Queen Victoria takes place at Westminster Abbey in London
- Dissolution of the Federal Republic of Central America: Honduras and Costa Rica follow the example of Nicaragua and secede from the federation

The wild and eccentric *Kapellmeister* Johann Kreisler was a character in several works by E.T.A. Hoffmann (1776–1822), that central figure of German Romanticism (poet, musician, critic) who was an all-important inspiration for Robert Schumann. In a way, Kreisler embodies the traits of both Eusebius and Florestan, the two alter egos the composer created and used in such earlier piano cycles as *Davidsbündlertänze* and *Carnaval* — in other words, Kreisler can be fiery and impetuous in one moment, dreamy and emotional the next. (Or did Schumann try to duplicate Hoffmann's feat in his novel *Kater Murr* [Murr the Cat], where the memoirs of the fictitious musician are interspersed with those of his cat?) In his eight brilliant "fantasy-pieces" published under the title *Kreisleriana*, Schumann didn't attempt to follow any storyline or to portray any particular episodes from Hoffmann's writings, but rather to articulate a creative artistic response to them. It is significant that the

pieces tend not to stay in one mood throughout; most of them move back and forth between contrasting sections, in turn fast and slow, passionate and lyrical. The tempo markings of almost all the movements contain the word *sehr* (very) or *äusserst* (extremely), which indicates that, for Schumann, the polarity of the emotions was crucial.

Our first impression of Kreisler is that he is quite a ball of fire, bursting onstage "*äusserst bewegt*" (extremely lively) with some very dramatic music in the key of d minor whose tragic connotations Schumann had inherited from Mozart. Contrast is immediately provided in a more reflective middle section in B-flat Major. In the second movement, this pattern is both turned inside out and greatly expanded: the beginning and the end are *innig* (intimate), and there are not one but two contrasting sections, marked *intermezzi* — one playful and the other sweepingly melodious. At the last return of the *innig* main section

Schumann adds some extremely “modern” chromatic harmonies.

“*Sehr aufgeregt*” (very excited), the third piece has a breathless, hectic melody, in a way anticipating the last movement. Here, however, it is completed by an extended lyrical middle section with long, singing *legato* lines.

Pianist-musicologist Charles Rosen called the extremely slow fourth movement “the lyrical center” of the entire work. The music reaches unprecedented depths of feeling; even the middle section, which is only slightly faster, offers little contrast this time. The fifth movement, on the other hand, is clearly a scherzo from beginning to end, dominated by a striking rhythmic pattern and some highly adventurous harmonic progressions. Movement six is another slow piece, yet, without any warning, it suddenly turns into a dance in the second half, with the slow melody returning only in part.

Two brief but memorable episodes close the work: a scherzo in the manner of the later Second Symphony but ending here, unexpectedly, with a slow chorale; and a brilliant *Reiterstück* (horseback-riding piece) in a light-hearted 6/8 meter, at the end of which the music, and Kreisler’s figure with it, seem to vanish into thin air.

## SONATINA FACILE (2016)

Jörg Widmann

*Born June 19, 1973 in Munich, Germany*

UMS premiere: This evening's performance marks the US premiere of this work.

*Sonatina facile*, jointly commissioned by Mitsuko Uchida, Carnegie Hall, and the brand-new Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, was first performed at the latter venue on January 18, 2017, just a week after it opened its doors to the public. The website of Widmann's publisher, Schott Music, contains the following description of the work:

As implied by the title *Sonatina facile*, this piano piece is an homage to Mozart's famous *Sonata in C Major, K. 545*. Not only are the movement headings "Allegro" — "Andante" — "Rondo" identical, but Jörg Widmann also explores Mozart's stylistic qualities, while playing with the ideals of Neoclassicism. In the outer movements, the themes from K. 545 appear repeatedly alongside typical figures from the Mozart's time such as the famous Alberti bass in the accompaniment.

From time to time, the piece distances itself far from the concept of simplicity: the complexity of the piano texture, the wild and expressive tempo, and dynamic changes sporadically lead the "facile" *ad absurdum*.

## FANTASY IN C MAJOR, OP. 17 (1836)

R. Schumann

UMS premiere: Harold Bauer; January 1902 in University Hall.

### Snapshots of History...In 1836:

- Davy Crockett arrives in Texas
- Charles Darwin returns to England aboard the HMS *Beagle* with biological data he will later use to develop his theory of evolution
- Spain recognizes the independence of Mexico

*Durch alle Töne tönet  
Im bunten Erdenraum  
Ein leiser Ton gezogen  
Für den, der heimlich lauschet.*

*Through all the tones  
around the many-colored earth,  
one soft, drawn-out note  
sounds for him who listens in secret.*

This motto, taken from a poem by the Romantic philosopher and poet Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829), introduces one of Schumann's most ambitious piano works, the *Fantasy in C Major, Op. 17*. The poetic lines were not chosen at random: there is "one soft, drawn-out note" running through the work that "he who listens in secret" will surely recognize. It is a passage from Beethoven's song cycle *An die ferne Geliebte* (To the Distant Beloved) that is alluded to several times, and finally quoted in full at the end of the first movement. The words of the otherwise undistinguished poet Alois Jeitteles:

*Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder,  
die ich Dir, Geliebte, sang...*

*Take them now, these songs  
that I sang to you, my beloved...*

...no doubt struck a deep nerve in Schumann, longing after his own "distant beloved," the prodigious pianist Clara Wieck, whose father had prohibited Schumann from having any contact with the young girl. (Schumann and Clara were married four years later, in 1840.)

Besides the reference to the "distant beloved," the quote from Beethoven had another meaning as well. Inspired by the two fantasy-sonatas Op. 27 (the second of which is the famous "Moonlight"), Schumann intended his work as a memorial to Beethoven, planning to call its three movements "Ruins," "Triumphal Arch," and "Wreath of Stars," respectively. Although these titles were eventually eliminated, the connections with Beethoven's music are numerous.

The sequence of movements in the Fantasy is most unusual. The impassioned first movement begins immediately on an emotional high point, with harmonic progressions that avoid the tonic (stable resting point) until the very end. The result is an atmosphere of continuous excitement, momentarily interrupted by an enigmatic passage marked

*"Im Legendenton"* (in the tone of a legend). This passage starts with a simple tune whose straightforward rhythms and harmonies contrast with the effusiveness of the preceding music. However, the musical delivery of this "legend" also becomes more and more impassioned, and by the time the initial theme returns, one almost perceives more similarity than contrast between the two materials.

The energetic second movement has a march-like theme with a progression of massive chords (Schumann was always fond of such chordal writing). There is a middle section in a somewhat slower tempo, followed by a return of the march music and an animated coda of extreme technical difficulty.

The last movement, slow and quiet, seems to be more a memorial to Schubert than to Beethoven. In fact, there are several almost literal echoes from Schubert's *Impromptu in G-flat Major*. Schumann initially planned to bring back Beethoven's "distant beloved" theme at the end, but he later rejected that idea. In the final form, the ending emphasizes the accompanying triplet figures, which become more agitated at first, before calming down in the *adagio* tempo of the concluding measures.

Schumann dedicated his Fantasy to none other than Franz Liszt, for whom he had a great admiration (and vice versa). When Liszt played the work for Schumann, Schumann was enthusiastic about the performance. They soon had a falling out, however, and after Schumann's death, Clara removed the dedication from the printed editions. It may have been in part because of these unpleasant

memories that Clara performed the fantasy only a single time. Liszt never played it in concert at all, but in 1854 he dedicated one of his greatest piano compositions, the *Sonata in b minor*, to Schumann, perhaps as a gesture of reconciliation. By that time it may have made little difference: 1854 was the year of Schumann's attempted suicide and his commitment to the asylum at Endenich where he died two years later.

*Program notes by Peter Laki.*





## UMS ARCHIVES

This evening's recital marks **Mitsuko Uchida**'s second performance under UMS auspices. Ms. Uchida made her UMS debut in November 1998 at Hill Auditorium in a recital performing works of J.S. Bach and Chopin.

Photo (previous spread): Mitsuko Uchida; photographer: Richard Avedon.

## ARTIST

Legendary pianist **Mitsuko Uchida** brings a deep insight into the music she plays through her own quest for truth and beauty. Renowned for her interpretations of Mozart, Schubert, Schumann, and Beethoven, she has also illuminated the music of Berg, Schoenberg, Webern, and Boulez for a new generation of listeners.

In 2016 Ms. Uchida was appointed an artistic partner to the Mahler Chamber Orchestra and began a series of concerts directing Mozart concerti from the keyboard in extensive tours of major European venues and Japan. Other recent highlights included an acclaimed performance of the Schoenberg Piano Concerto with the London Philharmonic and Valdimir Jurowski at the 2015 BBC Proms, play-directing the Cleveland Orchestra in performances at Severance Hall and Carnegie Hall, and two appearances at the 2016 Baden-Baden Festival with the Berlin Philharmonic and Sir Simon Rattle. Recital tours in 2016 included the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Théâtre des Champs Élysées, the Vienna Konzerthaus, the Royal Festival Hall, and Carnegie Hall. With a strong commitment to chamber music, Ms. Uchida collaborates closely with the world's finest musicians. Following concerts with Dorothea Röschmann, the Ebène Quartet, and Magdalena Kožená in 2015, she also appeared in chamber music programs with members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in the US, and with Jörg Widmann and members of the Mahler Chamber Orchestra in a residency at the Alte Oper in Frankfurt.

In 2017 Ms. Uchida will embark on a Schubert Sonata series, featuring 12 of Schubert's major works which she will tour throughout Europe and North America. She will also return to the Salzburg and Edinburgh Festivals and appear with the

Berlin Philharmonic and Simon Rattle, the Chicago Symphony and Riccardo Muti, and the Orchestra of Santa Cecilia and Antonio Pappano.

Ms. Uchida's loyal relationship with the finest orchestras and concert halls has resulted in numerous residencies. She has been artist-in-residence at the Cleveland Orchestra and at the Berlin Philharmonic, the Vienna Konzerthaus, Salzburg Mozartwoche, and Lucerne Festival. Carnegie Hall dedicated to her a *Perspectives* series entitled *Mitsuko Uchida: Vienna Revisited* and was featured in the Concertgebouw *Carte Blanche* series.

Ms. Uchida records exclusively for Decca. Her extensive discography includes the complete Mozart and Schubert piano sonatas. Since 2011 she has been recording Mozart's piano concerti with the Cleveland Orchestra live in concert and directing from the piano. The first release won a Grammy Award in 2011. The last installment featuring concerti K. 453 and K. 503 was released in fall 2016. Her recording of the Schoenberg Piano Concerto with Pierre Boulez and the Cleveland Orchestra won four awards, including the *Gramophone* Award for "Best Concerto."

Highly committed to aiding the development of young musicians, Mitsuko Uchida is a trustee of the Borletti-Buitoni Trust and director of the Marlboro Music Festival. In June 2009 she was made a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire. In May 2012 she was awarded the Royal Philharmonic Society's Gold Medal and in 2014 received an honorary degree from the University of Cambridge. A guest of honor at the Salzburg Mozartwoche in 2015, Ms. Uchida was awarded the Golden Mozart Medal. In October 2015, she received the Premium Imperiale Award from the Japan Arts Association.

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- 3/30 Renegade Pre-Performance Talk: *The Encounter*  
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