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David Niethamer, clarinet and George Manahan, piano

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UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC CONCERT SERIES

DAVID NIETHAMER, *clarinet*

GEORGE MANAHAN, *piano*

September 28, 1992, 8:15 PM
North Court Recital Hall

Première Rhapsodie

In 1909 Debussy consented to write two pieces for the 1910 clarinet competition of the Paris Conservatory: a *Petite Pièce* intended for sight-reading, and the *Première Rhapsodie* as a prepared piece. Two days before the July 10 competition examinations Debussy wrote his music editor: "On Sunday, you should feel sorry for me; I will have to hear the *Rhapsodie* for clarinet in B-flat played eleven times. I will tell you all about it if I am still alive." A week later he reported that "one of the candidates played it by heart and like a great musician." During 1911 Debussy orchestrated the work and although it was published, it was not performed in Paris until 1919, after the composer's death.

Sonata in F Minor

Written in 1894, the two sonatas for clarinet and piano of Op. 120 are the composer's last two works of instrumental chamber music. The F Minor sonata through its four movements moves from "initial dark melancholy to the highest of spirits." The first four notes of the opening theme are found throughout the work. The four movements are cast in classical molds: sonata form, ABA form, minuet, and rondo.

Fantasy

In one continuous movement, the *Fantasy* divides loosely into two parts; but the effect of the work is one of a constant evolution. Unity of the sections is achieved through the use of motives based on a minor third and major seventh. Large leaps, fast passage work, huge dynamic contrasts and long pianissimo melodic lines combine to produce a feeling of inexorable sweep. The piece culminates in two brilliant cadenzas, first for the piano and then for the clarinet. The subtitle of the work is the title of the popular song which inspired the melodic content of the work and to which the composer alludes very briefly in the clarinet cadenza.

Sonata

The Clarinet Sonata was to be Bernstein's first published piece. At the end of the summer of 1941 the composer had traveled to Key West seeking relief from hayfever attacks. While he had no particular reason to write a work for clarinet, Bernstein recalls that he had purchased a clarinet in a pawnshop in 1939 and had "fooled around with it." The *Grazioso* is neo-classical in style with a clarinet melody and a subordinate piano accompaniment. The second movement is in four sections alternating slow and fast tempos. The reflective slow sections are based on a scale-like motive and are highly expressive while the syncopated fast sections are gently jazzy. There is also a charming Latinesque tune which the composer suggests was probably the result of his visits to Key West nightclubs.

PROGRAM

Première Rhapsodie (1910)

Claude Debussy
(1862-1918)

Sonata in F Minor, Op. 120, No. 1
Allegro appassionato
Andante un poco Adagio
Allegretto grazioso
Vivace

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

INTERMISSION

Fantasy (. . . those harbor lights) (1983)

Joan Tower
(b. 1938)

Sonata (1942)
Grazioso
Andantino: Vivace e leggiero

Leonard Bernstein
(1918-1990)

David Niethamer was appointed Principal Clarinetist of the Richmond Symphony in 1979. He has appeared eight times as a soloist with the orchestra, winning critical acclaim and national recognition for the American premiere performances of Andre Casanova's *Ballade* for clarinet and string orchestra.

In addition to his orchestral career, Niethamer has maintained a busy schedule of chamber music, recitals, and teaching. Niethamer is Artistic Director of the Roxbury Chamber Players, resident ensemble for the summer "Music in Historic Places" series in Delaware County, New York. He has also performed with the Lenox String Quartet, the Composers Quartet, and has recorded as a member of the Roxbury Players and as a soloist for Opus One Records. Niethamer performed at the 1990 Clarinet Fest International in Quebec, at the 1988 joint conference of ClariNetwork International and the International Clarinet Society, with the Roxbury Players at ClarFest '86, and on the Brandermill Series in Richmond. He has collaborated with noted composers such as Karel Husa and Ned Rorem, and in Virginia has worked closely with Allan Blank, Judith Shatin, and Joel Suben.

Niethamer's teaching career has included two years as Visiting Lecturer of Clarinet and Chamber Music at Ithaca College. Niethamer has conducted master classes and workshops at the University of Richmond, Tennessee Tech, Oberlin College, and the University of Alabama, Huntsville. He currently teaches at the University of Richmond and St. Catherine's School.

George Manahan, embarking upon his sixth season as Music Director of the Richmond Symphony/Sinfonia, appears tonight as guest pianist with Mr. Niethamer. Receiving his formal education at the Manhattan School of Music, he was appointed to the faculty upon graduation. Guest appearances as a conductor have included performances with the San Francisco Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, National Symphony, and the Rochester Philharmonic. From 1984-86 he held the post of Music Director of the New York City Opera's touring ensemble. In 1988 Mr. Manahan conducted the American premiere of Penderecki's *The Black Mask* for the Santa Fe Opera and was named principal conductor of the Minnesota Opera where he now conducts two productions a season.

Family Weekend Concert
October 2, 1992, 8:15 PM
North Court Recital Hall



Mike Davison and Friends
Brass Quintet
October 4, 1992, 3:00 PM
North Court Recital Hall

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