



CONCERT PROGRAM III:

German Virtuosity

JULY 20 AND 22

Thursday, July 20

7:30 p.m., Stent Family Hall, Menlo School

Saturday, July 22

6:00 p.m., The Center for Performing Arts at Menlo-Atherton

SPECIAL THANKS

Music@Menlo dedicates these performances to the following individuals and organizations with gratitude for their generous support:

July 20: *The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation*



July 22: *Alan and Corinne Barkin*

PIERRE RODE (1774–1830)

Caprice no. 3 in G Major from *Vingt-quatre caprices en forme d'études* for Solo

Violin (ca. 1815)

Arnaud Sussmann, violin

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

Violin Sonata no. 10 in G Major, op. 96 (1812)

Allegro moderato

Adagio espressivo

Scherzo: Allegro

Poco allegretto

Arnaud Sussmann, violin; Wu Han, piano

LOUIS SPOHR (1784–1859)

Double String Quartet no. 1 in d minor, op. 65 (1823)

Allegro

Scherzo: Vivace

Larghetto

Finale: Allegro molto

Quartet I: Adam Barnett-Hart, Jessica Lee, violins; Roberto Díaz, viola; Dmitri Atapine, cello

Quartet II: Aaron Boyd, Soovin Kim, violins; Pierre Lapointe, viola; Brook Speltz, cello

INTERMISSION

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Concert Program III continues the festival's journey from the Classical period into the nineteenth century. The program offers Beethoven's final violin sonata as its point of departure into the new era—following a nod to the French virtuoso Pierre Rode, another of Viotti's disciples and the sonata's dedicatee. In the generation following Beethoven, Louis Spohr would become a standard-bearer for the German violin tradition, introducing expressive innovations such as those heard in his Double String Quartet that gave Romanticism its musical soul. The program continues with music by Ferdinand David, Spohr's prize pupil and muse to the German tradition's most brilliant medium, Felix Mendelssohn, whose Opus 3 Piano Quartet closes the program.

FERDINAND DAVID (1810–1873)

Caprice in c minor from *Six Caprices for Solo Violin, op. 9, no. 3* (1839)

Sean Lee, violin

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809–1847)

Piano Quartet no. 3 in b minor, op. 3 (1825)

Allegro molto

Andante

Allegro molto

Finale: Allegro vivace

Juho Pohjonen, piano; Sean Lee, violin; Roberto Díaz, viola; Keith Robinson, cello

Program Notes: German Virtuosity

Notes on the program by Patrick Castillo

PIERRE RODE

(Born February 16, 1774, Bordeaux, France; died November 25, 1830, Château de Bourbon)

Caprice no. 3 in G Major from *Vingt-quatre caprices en forme d'études* for Solo Violin

Composed: ca. 1815

Published: ca. 1815, Paris

Other works from this period: Violin Concerto no. 11 in D Major, op. 23 (ca. 1813); String Quartet no. 1 in E-flat Major, op. 11 (ca. 1815); Violin Concerto no. 12 in E Major, op. 27 (ca. 1815)

Approximate duration: 3 minutes

In 1787, G. B. Viotti met Pierre Rode, a thirteen-year-old French violin prodigy. So impressive were the young musician's gifts that Viotti, at that time Europe's most revered master of the instrument, offered to teach him for no fee. Rode quickly became Viotti's favorite student. Three years later, Rode made his Paris debut, performing Viotti's Violin Concerto no. 13, and was subsequently entrusted with the premieres of his master's Concerti nos. 17 and 18 (as Viotti had retired from public concertizing).

As he embarked on his professional career, Rode would indulge his penchant for travel. In 1795, he was appointed professor of violin at the newly opened Paris Conservatoire, but almost immediately he embarked on extensive concert tours of the Netherlands and Germany. In 1803, he traveled to Russia, via Germany, where he was heard by Louis Spohr.

By this time, Rode had secured his place as his teacher's heir. "Rode played with absolute mastery," noted the composer Johann Friedrich Reichardt. "He acquired the original style of his teacher Viotti—particularly his *Adagio* has something endearingly naïve which well reflects his tender mind and character." Another critic stated plainly, "He is the most accomplished violinist in all of Europe."

While still in his thirties, Rode's skills—and, consequently, his reputation—appear to have quickly declined. In 1812, he premiered Beethoven's Violin Sonata in G Major, op. 96, a performance that failed to satisfy the composer. (See the notes on Beethoven's sonata below.) Though he remained active as a composer and teacher (his students included Eduard Rietz, who would later become Mendelssohn's violin teacher and the dedicatee of that composer's celebrated String Octet), Rode gradually withdrew from performance. By 1825, as reported in a letter by Mendelssohn, Rode was "firm in his refusal to take a violin in his hand."

Despite his diminishing skills, the *Vingt-quatre caprices en forme d'études*, composed around 1815, testify to Rode's continued dynamism as a teacher in his final years. These twenty-four caprices have become an essential volume in the instrument's course of study. They are inventive works, technically and stylistically assured. In addition to their pedagogical importance, Rode's caprices moreover document the Classical chapter of the instrument's tradition, complementing the compositional era defined by Haydn and Mozart. If they are perhaps overlooked, it is surely by dint of their inevitable comparison to Paganini's own sea-parting *Twenty-Four Caprices*—composed around the same time (between 1802 and 1817) but seizing a new frontier of instrumental virtuosity.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

(Born Bonn, Germany, baptized December 17, 1770; died March 26, 1827, Vienna)

Violin Sonata no. 10 in G Major, op. 96

Composed: 1812, probably revised 1814–1815

Published: 1816, Vienna and London

*Bolted terms are defined in the glossary, which begins on page 92.

Dedication: Written for Pierre Rode, dedicated to Archduke Rudolph

First performance: December 29, 1812

Other works from this period: String Quartet in f minor, op. 95, *Serioso* (1810–1811); Piano Trio in B-flat Major, op. 97, *Archduke* (1810–1811); Symphony no. 7 in A Major, op. 92 (1811–1812); Symphony no. 8 in F Major, op. 93 (1812)

Approximate duration: 28 minutes

Beethoven was halfway through the composition of a new violin sonata when the great violinist Pierre Rode toured to Vienna in 1812. Beethoven quickly completed the sonata for a performance on December 29 by Rode with Beethoven's piano student and patron, Archduke Rudolph. What might have been an auspicious collaboration between Western music's greatest composer and one of the finest virtuosos of his day did not, alas, come off successfully.

Rode's French aesthetic (and, perhaps, the onset of a decline in his skills) proved a poor match with Beethoven's bold style. Beethoven confided in a letter to the archduke, "I have not hurried unduly to compose the last movement... as in view of Rode's playing I have had to give more thought to the composition of this movement. In our finales we like to have fairly noisy passages, but Rode does not care for them—and so I have been rather hampered." A contemporary critic agreed: "Mr. Rode's greatness does not seem to lie in this type of music." After the performance, Beethoven considered sending Rode the violin part for further study but—remarkably, for such a hothead as Beethoven—thought better of it, lest he offend such a great, if diminished, artist.

Though the intriguing partnership between Beethoven and Rode never flourished, it nevertheless produced an exquisite work in the Violin Sonata in G Major, op. 96—the last of Beethoven's ten violin sonatas and "the most perfect work in the whole series," in the estimation of the violinist Carl Flesch.

Opus 96 eschews the fiery virtuosity of the more famous *Kreutzer* Sonata, dealing instead in lyricism, delicacy, and refinement. Violin and piano exchange, then lovingly extend, a graceful opening gesture—simply a trill followed by three descending notes—as the sonata slowly comes into being. It is music that calls to mind the expressive subtlety of the E-flat Piano Trio, op. 70, no. 2—a work whose restraint casts it in sharp relief against the *Ghost* Trio, op. 70, no. 1, its extroverted sibling. In a similar manner, the present sonata defies the *Sturm-und-Drang* Beethoven of popular imagination. Witness the *Allegro moderato*'s soft-footed second theme.

The image shows a musical score for the second movement of Beethoven's Violin Sonata no. 10 in G Major, op. 96. It is a score for Violin (vn.) and Piano (Pno.). The top system shows the violin part with a trill followed by three descending notes, and the piano part with a corresponding accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'ritard.' and 'a tempo'. The bottom system shows the violin part with a trill followed by three descending notes, and the piano part with a corresponding accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'ritard.' and 'a tempo'. The score is in G major and 3/4 time.

Beethoven extends the exposition's innocuous closing material into the development section and uses it to traverse shifting harmonies. This music passes without fanfare into the recapitulation.

The sonata's second movement, marked *Adagio espressivo*, descends from bright G major to warm E-flat major, an ideal harmonic setting for its warm melodic material, sung by the violin *sotto voce*. When this music gives way to a run of thirty-second notes, Beethoven takes care to mark the florid passage *molto dolce*, lest the violinist get too carried away. The movement is thus painted in soft brushstrokes and muted hues.

This elegant music proceeds *attacca* to the ephemeral scherzo—so brief it almost serves as a **coda** to the *Adagio* rather than a movement unto itself. Beethoven casts this disruption of the previous reverie in hard-edged g minor until a sudden shift to G major occurs in its final measures, as if to assure the listener that the movement's dourness was in jest.

The sonata concludes with a set of variations on a lilting "Gassenhauer" theme, a kind of urban folk song typically found in light operas of the day. Beethoven crafts a robust finale from this seemingly humble material, reimagining it towards a variety of expressive ends, spinning even a fugato variation.

LOUIS SPOHR

(Born April 5, 1784, Brunswick, Germany; died October 22, 1859, Kassel, Germany)

Double String Quartet no. 1 in d minor, op. 65

Composed: 1823

Published: 1825, Leipzig

Other works from this period: *Potpourri* in a minor for Violin and Orchestra, op. 66, *On Themes from Jessonda* (1823); *Quatuor brillant* no. 2 in A Major for String Quartet, op. 68 (1823); Three Duos for Two Violins, op. 67 (1824)

Approximate duration: 24 minutes

Although his renown has flagged since his death in 1859, the German composer Louis Spohr was regarded by his contemporaries as an equal to Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. Musicologist Clive Brown notes that both Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* and Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* were composed within the span of Spohr's lifetime and that "his own work looks, Janus-like, towards both the formalism and clarity of the Classical tradition and the structural and harmonic experimentation associated with nineteenth-century Romanticism." Like Mendelssohn, with whom he enjoyed a great mutual respect and advocacy for each other's music, Spohr was a famous "multihyphenate": a widely acclaimed conductor and violinist, as well as one of his generation's most famous composers.

Spohr had a penchant for experimentation. As a violinist, he invented the chinrest; as a conductor, he was the first to use a baton. An equal spirit of inventiveness is on display in the Double String Quartet in d minor, op. 65, the first of four such works Spohr composed. In conceiving the unusual work, Spohr related, "I imagined how two quartet groups, sitting close to each other, should be made to play one piece of music and keep in reserve the eight-voice combination for the chief parts of the composition only. I was greatly impressed to find that its effect was far greater than that of simple quartets or quintets." Audiences agreed: Spohr's Double Quartet achieved widespread popularity, prompting the composer's bewilderment that more composers did not pursue the genre.

The Double Quartet inevitably invited comparisons, then as now, with Mendelssohn's landmark Octet, composed two years later. Spohr weighed in himself, surmising that Mendelssohn's Octet "belongs to quite another kind of art, in which the two quartets do not concert and interchange in double choir with each other, but all eight instruments work together." Indeed, whereas Mendelssohn's masterpiece broke new ground as a true octet, Spohr's essays in this genre are more accurately double quartets, with the first quartet generally cast in a more virtuosic role (and with an especially heroic first violin part, which Spohr presumably wrote for himself to play). Nevertheless, likewise are there moments in the Double Quartet of inspired integration of all eight instruments; what's more, Mendelssohn is known to have been familiar with Spohr's Opus 65 and to have studied it in preparation for his Octet.

The *Allegro* first movement opens with an unabashedly Romantic statement, marked by wide leaps and dramatic silences and trills. The wide melodic intervals give the impression of Spohr stretching his canvas: the double-quartet medium allows for writing of pseudo-orchestral breadth. By tracing such expansive terrain with his opening theme, Spohr prepares the ear for the rich sonorities that follow.

An elfin g minor scherzo in 6/4 time follows, its theme a lightning-quick three-note ascending figure followed by six **staccato** notes. The movement's central trio section shifts to G major; a galloping rhythm in the second quartet supports melodic utterances in turn by the first violin, viola, and cello.

The Double Quartet's beguiling slow movement revolves around a tenderhearted cantabile melody, which Spohr uses to weave ravishing eight-voice textures. The brilliant finale likewise demonstrates a keen ear for texture, featuring both interactive passages between the two quartets and powerful statements by the fully integrated octet.

FERDINAND DAVID

(Born June 19, 1810, Hamburg, Germany; died July 18, 1873, Klosters, Switzerland)

Caprice in c minor from Six Caprices for Solo Violin, op. 9, no. 3

Composed: 1839

Published: Leipzig, 1839

Other works from this period: Trombone Concertino in E-flat Major, op. 4 (1838); *Introduction and Variations on a Theme of Schubert* for Clarinet and Orchestra, op. 8 (1838); Violin Concerto no. 1 in e minor, op. 10 (1839)

Approximate duration: 5 minutes

The German violinist and composer Ferdinand David boasted an illustrious pedigree, studying violin with Louis Spohr, one of Western Europe's most renowned musicians, and theory with Moritz Hauptmann. (His elite training distinguished him even into adulthood: on hearing David in 1839, Ignaz Moscheles proclaimed, "This worthy pupil of Spohr played his master's music in a grand and noble style, his own bravuras with faultless power of execution, and his quartet playing...delighted everyone with any genuine artistic taste.")

But it was his friendship with Mendelssohn that would prove the most consequential to David's artistic life. The two became acquainted as teenagers and played chamber music together with Julius and Eduard Rietz. In 1836, Mendelssohn appointed David Concertmaster of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, a post he held for the rest of his life. In this capacity, David became a major figure in Leipzig's musical culture, playing recitals and chamber music concerts with Mendelssohn in addition to his activities with the orchestra. In 1843, Mendelssohn founded the Leipzig Conservatory and appointed David Head of the Violin Department, where his students included Joseph Joachim.

David advised Mendelssohn on the composition of the Violin Concerto that would become a benchmark of the instrument's repertoire and was entrusted with the concerto's premiere. Following the premiere, Schumann paid David the strange compliment, "You see, this is the concerto you always wanted to write!"

Ferdinand David was indeed a prolific composer in his own right, producing five concerti and other works for violin and orchestra, as well as numerous chamber works, choral pieces, and songs. In 1839, he published the set of Six Caprices for Solo Violin, op. 9. The Third Caprice, in c minor, begins with a gallant A section in 6/8 time. The contrasting middle section, a fusillade of double- and triple-stops, calls for considerable firepower.

FELIX MENDELSSOHN

(Born February 3, 1809, Hamburg, Germany; died November 4, 1847, Leipzig)

Piano Quartet no. 3 in b minor, op. 3

Composed: Completed January 18, 1825

Published: 1825, Berlin

Dedication: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

First performance: May 1826, Weimar

Other works from this period: Detailed in the notes below

Approximate duration: 33 minutes

Though composed when Mendelssohn was just fifteen years old, the Piano Quartet in b minor, op. 3, is an adolescent work only in terms of chronology. It is the last of a set of three piano quartets that the young composer chose to be his first published opuses, following the Piano Quartets in c minor and f minor, opp. 1 and 2, completed in 1822 and 1823, respectively. Belying his youth, the work exhibits the craftsmanship of a fully matured composer.

Moreover, the b minor Quartet documents the impressive productivity of Mendelssohn's adolescence. Between 1823 and 1825, Mendelssohn completed four string symphonies, the c minor Sinfoniesatz, and his Symphony no. 1; two double concertos: one for violin and piano and another for two pianos; *Die beiden Neffen* and *Die Hochzeit des Camacho*, his fourth and fifth operas; and the Opus 4 Violin Sonata, the Opus 110 Sextet, and, the crowning achievement of Mendelssohn's youth, the Opus 20 Octet; among other works. The prodigious young Mendelssohn consequently caught the attention of Western Europe's musical community and came to be regarded by many as the second Mozart. Astonished at his rapid development, Mendelssohn's teacher Carl Friedrich Zelter noted, "He is growing beneath my eyes."

By 1824, Mendelssohn's seduction by the dramatic force of Beethoven's language was complete, and the music composed during Mendelssohn's fifteenth year increasingly foreshadows Romantic sensibilities. The score to Opus 3 bears a dedication to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the sage poet with whom the young Mendelssohn developed a friendship, despite a difference in age of sixty years. (Goethe, on first hearing the child Mendelssohn play, remarked on his abilities, "Such as I never believed possible in one of his age." "And yet," noted Zelter, "you heard Mozart in his seventh year." Goethe: "Yes, I was myself just twelve and like everybody else was immensely astonished at his extraordinary cleverness. But what this pupil of yours accomplishes bears the same relation to the little Mozart that the perfect speech of a grown man does to the prattle of a child.") On receiving the published score, Goethe sent his thanks to the young composer, praising the work as the "graceful embodiment of that beautiful, rich, energetic soul which so astonished me when you first made me acquainted with it."

Though overshadowed by the Octet, completed nine months later, the Piano Quartet in b minor nevertheless constitutes a breakthrough work for Mendelssohn. In its ambitious dramatic scope and the potency of its musical ideas, the quartet reveals a precocious assimilation of Beethoven's visionary middle-period works. Far from derivative of that key influence, however, it likewise presages the distinctly personal idiom of Mendelssohn's later music.

An unsettling theme begins the quartet, peculiarly contoured by the Neapolitan (i.e., flattened second) tone, in the second measure.

Allegro molto



Piano notation for the first movement, starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a 3/4 time signature. The key signature is B minor. The notation shows the piano part with a treble and bass clef.

The strings enter, not with the expected consequent phrase but with a nervous murmur, viola and cello ascending by half step; a pair of deceptive **cadences** extends this weird opening statement, in whose wake follows an unnerving viola solo. Throughout the movement, Mendelssohn utilizes the ensemble to such coloristic effect, giving voice to adolescent angst with the utter mastery of a fully formed compositional imagination.

The second theme proffers lyricism and good humor but blighted by fragments of the first theme's ominous Neapolitan turn. Mendelssohn forgoes the conventional **sonata-form** repeat of the exposition; instead, the movement proceeds headstrong into the **Più allegro** development section, featuring new thematic material and teeming with Romantic *Sturm und Drang*. Both the content and character of the development return in the movement's coda.

The quartet's jewel is its *Andante* second movement, replete with exquisite pleasures for the attentive ear. Its opening theme foreshadows the melodic genius of Mendelssohn's signature *Lieder ohne Worte* but fancifully ornamented, indebted perhaps to the young composer's studious penchant for the Baroque. A hazy reverie of undulating sixteenth notes in the violin and viola follows; the piano extends this gesture, underpinning a sweeping dolce melody in the strings.

Mendelssohn transfigures the **half-step** turn that marked the quartet's opening measures to launch the fleet-footed third movement.

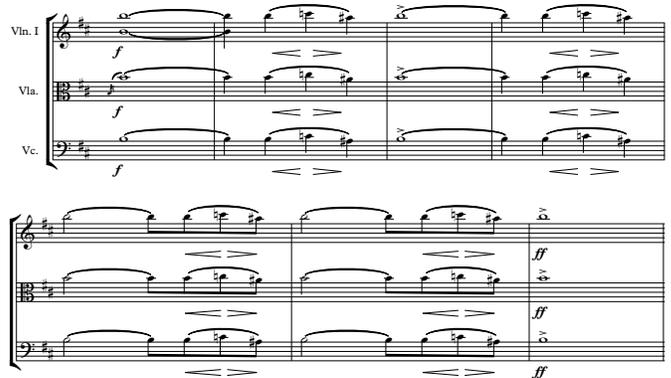
Allegro molto



Piano notation for the third movement, starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a 3/8 time signature. The key signature is B minor. The notation shows the piano part with a treble and bass clef.

This blithe scherzo looks ahead to the *Midsummer Night's Dream*-style scherzi of Mendelssohn's later compositions, its quicksilver piano part an over-caffeinated *moto perpetuo* of sixteenth notes.

The scherzo's vitality spills over into the start of the quartet's final movement. Cutting through **forte**-pianissimo string *tremolandi*, the piano presents a sprightly melody, its ascending half steps marking it as a close relative of the first movement's Neapolitan-colored theme. At the conclusion of this high-octave finale, powered by unrelenting **triplets** in the piano, that theme is recalled four times; the **motif** that opened the quartet, and resurfaced in the scherzo, has the final word, affirming the work as a coherent whole.



String notation for the third movement, showing Violin I, Viola, and Cello parts. Dynamics include *f* and *ff*. The notation shows the string parts with treble and bass clefs.