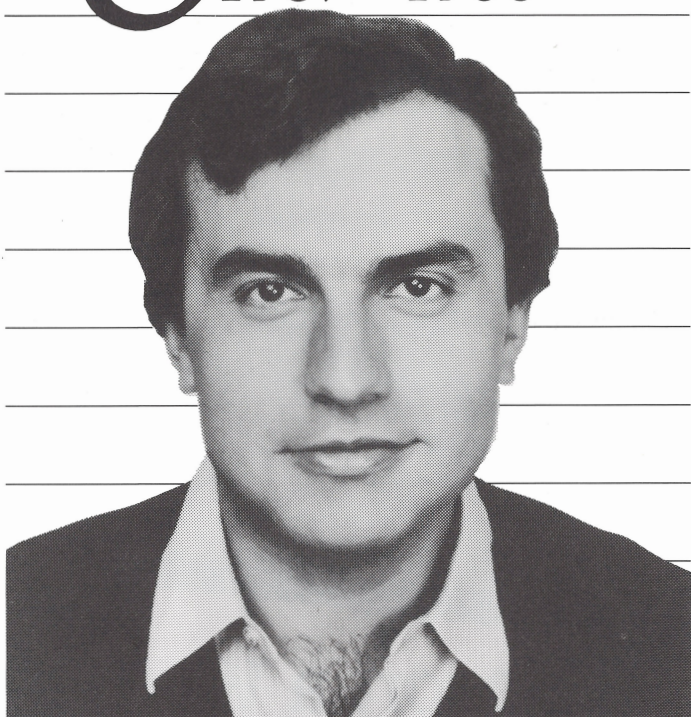


8th SEASON
1987 – 1988



YEFIM BRONFMAN

• PIANO •

Sunday, April 24th, 1988

Vancouver Playhouse

in cooperation with CBC Radio





Vancouver Recital Society

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PROGRAM

Three Sonatas

C minor, L.352: F major, L.479: D major, L.14

Domenico Scarlatti
(1685—1757)

Though the music of Scarlatti is increasingly popular among the burgeoning crop of early music specialists exploring performance styles of the pre-classic era, for most of this century the tenuous foothold his music maintained in the concert repertoire was exclusively through piano performances of the celebrated keyboard sonatas. In his position of staff composer to Maria Barbara, Infanta of Portugal, Scarlatti wrote over 500 single-movement

works for harpsichord, works so eminently successful that D.J. Grout has asserted them to be “as idiomatic for the harpsichord as Chopin or Debussy’s (music) is for the piano...” Here, of course, lies the controversy: many purists of highly ethical countenance decry the transfer of these glittering miniatures to the modern concert grand. On the other hand, perhaps the most eminent of all Scarlatti scholar/performers, Ralph Kirkpatrick, assisted Vladimir Horowitz with his famous piano readings of the works (and even quibbled that Horowitz’s approach was if anything, needlessly cautious and literal).

Variations and Fugue on a theme of Handel, Op.24 (1861) **Johannes Brahms**
Aria—Variations 1 to 25—Fugue (1833—1897)

Though Johannes Brahms made an impressive debut as a keyboard composer with his two sonatas Op.1 and Op. 2, he was sufficiently self-critical to embark on a long period of self-directed apprenticeship in order to further his mastery of the craft of composition. Not surprisingly, a form which occurs with some frequency in his earlier work is the theme and variations.

The *Handel Variations* of 1861 are a beguiling combination of youthful verve and studied craftsmanship; Brahms was clearly trying out any number of concepts in an attempt to plumb the true depths of his own technical resources. This is not to imply that the work is in any way a “student” composition — on the contrary, it won (albeit grudgingly) the praise of Richard Wagner, who remarked that Brahms demonstrated “what may still be done with the old forms, provided that someone appears who knows how to treat them.”

Intermission

Piano Sonata No. 8 in B flat minor, Op. 84 **Sergey Prokofiev**
 (1891—1953)

Prokofiev began his trio of “war sonatas” in 1939, but only finished the last, No. 8, in 1944; it is thus roughly contemporary with the D major sonata for flute or violin heard last fall. Writing 30 years ago, the not uncontroversial Soviet musicologist, Israel Nestyev commented on the work’s “expressionistic tendencies,” its “exaggeration, lack of restraint and harsh dissonance,” “the enigmatic, bizarre quality of the lyrical themes” and “the predominance of pure rhythm and motion over the melodic element.” These compositional idioms “may be of interest to seasoned professionals,” he wrote, but they are “not always easily grasped by the average listener.” Nonetheless, he concludes that despite its complexity, it occupies a position of supreme honour as “one of Prokofiev’s finest virtuoso piano works.”

Meet the Artist...

Yefim Bronfman

Yefim Bronfman was born in Tashkent in 1958 and began piano studies with his mother when he was 7 years old. He was immersed in music right from the start; both his father and his sister are violinists. In 1973, at the age of 15, he emigrated with his family to Israel where he became a student of pianist Arie Vardi, head of the Rubin Academy of Music at Tel Aviv University. The following year he won a scholarship from the American-Israel Cultural Foundation which brought him to the attention of Isaac Stern.

Mr. Bronfman won immediate international recognition in 1975 at the age of 17 when he made his North American debut with the Montreal Symphony under Zubin Mehta. A year later, he toured the U.S. with the Israel Philharmonic under Leonard Bernstein and Zubin Mehta, the beginning of a long association with that orchestra.

In the U.S. he studied at Juilliard, Marlboro and Curtis with Rudolf Firkusny, Leon Fleisher and Rudolf Serkin. Since then, Yefim Bronfman has performed on all five con-

tinents as soloist with the world's great orchestras, among them the New York Philharmonic (on a regular basis), the Berlin Philharmonic, the Chicago and Detroit Symphonies, the Philadelphia and Cleveland Orchestras, the Israel and Los Angeles Philharmonics and London's Philharmonia and Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Conductors with whom he has collaborated include Vladimir Ashkenazy, Bernstein, Comissiona, Dutoit, Leinsdorf, Marriner, Mehta, Rattle, Slatkin and Zukerman.

Mr. Bronfman's chamber music performances include appearances at New York's Mostly Mozart Festival, the Ravinia, Saratoga, Seattle and Spoleto Festivals, as well as duo performances with both Shlomo Mintz and Isaac Stern, and in Aspen last summer in trio performances with Cho-Liang Lin and Gary Hoffman.

Mr. Bronfman's first solo recording (Brahms' Sonata in F Minor and Scherzo Op. 4) for the Musical Heritage label has recently been released. His disc for Deutsche Grammophon with Shlomo Mintz (Franck, Debussy and Ravel Violin Sonatas) received a Grammy nomination. Two other discs with Mintz (Faure' Violin Sonatas and Prokofiev Violin Sonatas) are due for release shortly. He has also recorded Mozart Sonatas for Piano and Violin with Robert Mann.

Yefim Bronfman's recital in Vancouver tonight follows a performance in London's Albert Hall last week in which he performed in a benefit concert under the direction of Lorin Maazel, which was telecast across Europe.

This is Mr. Bronfman's third appearance for the Vancouver Recital Society; his other appearances have been in our first season (1980-81) and then again in the 1983-84 season.

Tonight's concert is being broadcast at a later date by CBC Stereo's "Arts National" (FM 105.7).

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The Vancouver Recital Society gratefully acknowledges the support of
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