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The German Society of Pennsylvania
Founded in 1764

presents

Roberto Prosseda
Mendelssohn Discoveries

Sunday
October 22, 2006
at 3:00 pm

Albert and Hete Barthelmes Auditorium
611 Spring Garden Street Philadelphia, PA
Calendar of Events at the German Society of Pennsylvania

October
Tues. Oct. 24  “Homeopathy and the Life of Dr. Samuel Hahnemann”
Presented by Alan V. Schmukler, 12:00 noon
Fri. Oct. 27  Film Fest, “The Last Days of Sophie Scholl”, 6:30pm

November
Fri. Nov. 3  Skatabend, 6:30pm
Sat. Nov. 4  Beer Tasting with Marnie Old, 2:30pm
Sat. Nov. 4  St. Martin’s Day Parade, 5:00pm
Sun. Nov. 5  Reopening of the Horner Memorial Library and Liederabend with Prof. M. Keenze, 4:00pm
Fri. Nov. 10  Film Fest, “Mephisto”, 6:30pm
Mon. Nov. 13  Konversationsabend, Discussion on Dr. Merkel, 7:00pm
Sun. Nov. 19*  The Wister Quartet with Maestro Eschenbach, 3:00pm

December
Fri. Dec. 1  Skatabend, 6:30pm
Sat. Dec. 2  Christmas Bazaar, 12:00 noon
Fri. Dec. 8  Film Fest, “Der Tanz auf dem Vulkan”, 6:30pm
Sun. Dec. 10*  Birgit Gruetzner and Andreas Greger Concert, 3:00pm
Wed. Dec. 13  Konversationsabend, Advent Celebration, 7:00pm
Sat. Dec. 16  Wine and Food Tasting with Marnie Old, 3:00pm
Sun. Dec. 31  Sylvesterabend, International Buffet & Open Bar, 9:00pm

January
Mon. Jan. 8  Winter Session of German Language Classes Begin
Fri. Jan. 12*  Night and Day: The Best of Cole Porter, 7:00pm
Fri. Jan. 19  Film Fest, TBA, 6:30pm
Sun. Jan. 21*  Philadelphia Trio Concert, 3:00pm
Tues. Jan. 23  Konversationsabend, 7:00pm

*Is part of the 2006/07 “Wister and More!” Ten Concert Series

History of the German Society of Pennsylvania

In 1683 thirteen families from Krefeld under the leadership of Frankfurt lawyer, Franz Daniel Pastorius, founded the first German colony in America: Germantown — today part of Philadelphia. Many of these immigrants formed clubs that enabled them to preserve their cultural heritage. They also formed clubs that emphasized a specific geographic area, such as the Swabians, Bavarians, Saxons, Danube Swabians, Plattdeutsche, Tyroleans, and many others.

The German Society of Pennsylvania, founded in 1764, is the oldest German organization in the United States. It was founded to protect German immigrants from unscrupulous shipping agents and to ensure just treatment on their arrival here.

Since that time, the German Society has dedicated its efforts to preserving German heritage. This it does, for instance, by offering a full-fledged German language program as well as scholarships and prizes to students of German. In addition, the Society is a source of cultural programs, lectures, film series, and seminars. These events build bridges and strengthen national and international relations among individuals, organizations, businesses and governments.

The fine arts program also includes presentations that feature European music and literature as well as access to the Joseph P. Horner Memorial Library for education and research. The newly restored Library, holding over 70,000 volumes, is the largest private German library outside the Federal Republic of Germany.

In serving its members and the community, and in all its undertakings, the Society strives to benefit anyone in need of its resources.

Since the time of Pastorius, more than 8,000,000 Germans reached these shores. Today, 29% of the total population in the United States claims German ancestry.
Roberto Prosseda was born in Latina, Italy in 1975. After receiving a diploma from the Respighi Conservatory, he studied at the Accademia Pianistica and the International Piano Foundation. His recent engagements have included the Berlin Philharmonie, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Wigmore Hall, Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival, Ravenna Festival, Triennale Köln and Biennale di Venezia (among many others). He has lectured and given master classes at universities and conservatories, such as Pepperdine, Georgetown, British Columbia, Williams College and Australian National University.

Mr. Prosseda has appeared as a soloist with the Filarmonica della Scala, Philharmonie der Nationen, Bochumer Symphoniker, Wiener Kammerorchester, Kammerakademie Potsdam and Orchestra della Toscana.

His discography includes the complete piano works by two prominent modern Italian composers: Goffredo Petrassi and Luigi Dallapiccola. In May 2005, Mr. Prosseda’s first Decca album was released, entitled “Mendelssohn Discoveries”. It is entirely dedicated to Felix Mendelssohn’s piano work never before recorded. In May 2006, Decca released a second album, “Mendelssohn Rarities”, with four unpublished piano sonatas by Mendelssohn. In 2006 and 2007, Mr. Prosseda will be presenting many World Premieres of Mendelssohn’s unpublished piano works in Leipzig, Berlin, New York, Toronto and London.

Felix Mendelssohn

Born in Hamburg in 1809, Mendelssohn was regarded as the greatest musical child prodigy after Mozart. He was a skilled artist and could speak many languages. His work includes symphonies, concertos, oratorios, piano and chamber music.

In 1835, he was appointed as conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and founded the Leipzig Conservatory. This let him play a leading part in his country’s musical life.

He died in 1847, and was mourned by music lovers around the world.
The monothematic first movement of the Sonata in E minor begins with a slow section. The dissonant style, dotted rhythms, and hand crossings of Mendelssohn’s opening recalls an example by his own teacher Ludwig Berger. The second movement (Andante), with its gentle dactylic rhythms, suggests perhaps the character of a siciliano. The finale (Allegro) nods once again toward Mozart – the melodic profile of the opening theme and percussive, repeated pitches find their source in the finale of the Piano Sonata in C minor, K. 457.

Mendelssohn composed fugues throughout his career, partly because of his natural predilection for writing complex parts, and partly because of his thorough study of J.S. Bach. The Fugue in E-flat major, completed in 1826, dates from the period when Mendelssohn was beginning to study and rehearse portions of Bach’s St. Matthew Passion. The Fugue actually uses a subject that seems to have been inspired by a recitative in the Passion (No. 15), in which Christ prophesies his betrayal – a deeply felt rumination of the music of Bach. This composition shows Mendelssohn’s immersion in Bach and mastery of counterpoint while it reveals a highly individual and subjective form of expression by a 17-year-old composer.

Mendelssohn appended the Lied in A major to a letter written from Munich to his sister, Fanny, on June 14, 1830, two days before she gave birth prematurely to her son. Mendelssohn explained that his music expressed the renewed health he prayed God would grant her. After his nephew’s birth, the composer sent another congratulatory piano piece which was later revised and published as the Lied ohne Worte Op. 30 No. 2.

The Lied ohne Worte “Albumblatt” in A major (Andante con moto) was composed in 1830 when Mendelssohn spent two weeks with the septuagenarian Goethe. He inscribed the piano piece in the album of Ottilie von Goethe, the poet’s daughter-in-law, who later wrote of the composer: “One can praise him without once adding a ‘but’; his musical feeling is so correct, his mind so clear, his nature so healthy and youthful, that straightaway one inevitably finds him likable at the keyboard or away from it, and is always satisfied with him.”

Mendelssohn recorded the Lied ohne Worte in F major in the album of Doris Löwe some time in the 1840s. Mendelssohn never published the composition, filled with quiet arpeggios that accompany melodic reveries reminiscent of Robert Schumann.

Pianist and composer Hans Fazzari’s (1931) compositions, mostly for piano, recall the atmospheres coming from Chopin, Scriabin and Debussy’s piano languages. Many of his pieces, like the Lied ohne Worte, express a nostalgic feeling based on a preexisting material (in this case, Mendelssohn’s Lied ohne Worte). Active also as musicologist, Hans Fazzari did the Italian translation of Eric Werner’s biography of Felix Mendelssohn.

The unpublished “Allegro con Fuoco” in G major was composed by Mendelssohn in 1840-41. The harmonic structure of this long fragment recalls the first movement of Schubert’s G major Sonata D894. The Italian composer Gabrio Taglietti completed the piece, and the result was presented in Mr. Prosseda’s recital at Berlin Philharmonie last September as a World Premiere. The present performance in Philadelphia is the American Premiere.

The little-known Adagio and Presto agitato in Bb minor was released in 1836. Composed in 1833 as an Adagio linked to a Presto con fuoco, the work was refashioned one month later with an entirely new Adagio.

The Capriccio in E-flat minor harnesses an intimate, cantabile Andante in Eb major to a virtuoso Allegro movement in sonata form. The Allegro includes occasional references to Beethoven. It reveals that by 1823 Mendelssohn was coming to terms with the composer, whose Fifth Symphony elicited for Goethe no emotion but was only “astonishing and grandiose.”

The first movement of the Piano Sonata in F minor begins with a turning figure introduced in unison and then fleshed out with harmony. The Adagio in C major, which has the character of a pastorate, invokes the baroque with a series of four ascending, overlapping entries of the principal theme with which Mendelssohn gradually builds up the complexity of the texture. In contrast, the impetuous concluding Presto, which features brilliant scale passages and off-beat accents, suggests the style of an etude.