February 8, 2015, at 3pm

The Westchester Philharmonic's Friends & Family Concert

Ted Sperling, conductor
Anne-Marie McDermott, piano

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)
Overture to *The Magic Flute*, K.620 (1791)

EDVARD GRIEG (1843–1907)
Piano Concerto in A minor, Op.16 (1868)

I. Allegro molto moderato
II. Adagio
III. Allegro moderato molto e marcato

Ms. McDermott

Intermission

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)
Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op.36 (1802)

I. Adagio molto — Allegro con brio
II. Larghetto
III. Scherzo: Allegro
IV. Allegro molto

Major Support for the 2014-15 Season provided by

Leona Kern
Vivian Milstein
Murray and Teddi Stahl

This season is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

This season is made possible by ArtsWestchester with support from Westchester County Government.

Program Notes – CONCERT III

Creating a Concert Program

The sequence of overture, concerto, and symphony is a time-honored formula for orchestral programs. For this afternoon's concert, conductor Ted Sperling has selected an overture and a symphony from the Viennese symphonic tradition. They frame a piano concerto that is the essence of musical romanticism.

Maestro Sperling opens with the Overture to Mozart's delightful opera *The Magic Flute*, a work that combines Masonic symbolism, fairy tale drama, and high comedy. A stately introduction yields to a lively imitative Allegro. Mozart charms us every step of the way.

Next, pianist Anne-Marie McDermott joins the Westchester Philharmonic for Edvard Grieg's beloved Piano Concerto. Impetuous and exciting in its outer movements, this work boasts Chopinesque delicacy in its central *Adagio*. Grieg's finale is a propulsive Norwegian dance.

Following intermission, we hear Beethoven's Second Symphony. Joy, good cheer, and steadfast strength flow throughout the Second Symphony. Beethoven liked to take his audience by surprise. Listen for sudden changes in dynamics and unexpected accents. His dance rhythms will have your foot tapping.

Overture to *The Magic Flute*, K.620

WOLFGANG AMADÈ MOZART

Born 27 January, 1756 in Salzburg, Austria
Died 5 December, 1791 in Vienna

Three majestic chords open the overture to Mozart's penultimate opera, *The Magic Flute*. The number three is all-important to this symbolic masterwork. From the opening scene, when three ladies rescue the terrified Tamino from a dragon, it is clear that the concept of three will figure prominently. Dominating the plot are three couples: Tamino and Pamina, the Queen of the Night and Sarastro, Papageno, and Papagena. Three genii [boys] announce the three ordeals the lovers Tamino and Pamina must undergo before they may be united.

In a conscious gesture of musical unity with this symbolism, Mozart cast his overture in E-flat major, which has a key signature of three flats. Formally, the overture is a merger of symphonic sonata form and fugue. Those opening chords announce a slow introduction; the chords resound again – three times each! – at the beginning of the development section, when the Adagio returns briefly. The entire overture is a marvelous combination of noble sentiment and effervescent spirit, much like the opera it precedes.

The overture is scored for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, and trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, and strings.

Piano Concerto in A minor, Op.16

EDVARD GRIEG

Born 15 June, 1843 in Bergen, Norway
Died 4 September, 1907 in Bergen

Norway's celebrated musical son, Edvard Grieg, was sent to Germany when he was 15 to study at the Leipzig Conservatory. One of his piano teachers there was the great virtuoso Ignaz Moscheles. Though Grieg was not happy in Leipzig, he became immersed in the very lively musical culture that mid-19th-century Germany offered. Before settling permanently in Norway, he also spent time in Copenhagen, where Niels Gade was the most influential composer.

Beginning in the 1860s, however, Grieg began to take a strong interest in the folk music of his homeland. Thenceforth his music took on an increasingly Norwegian slant. Today, Grieg is regarded as the most important composer that Norway has produced, and the father of Norwegian nationalist music.

In spite of his celebrity in his homeland, Grieg's international reputation rests primarily on the Piano Concerto, Op.16. As its opus number indicates, it is a relatively early work, completed when the composer was only 25; he lived into his 60s. The concerto is important for a number of reasons. It was the largest orchestral work that Grieg composed, and the last piece that he wrote in the Austro-Germanic tradition. Thereafter, he drew on Norwegian folk music and dance rhythms in his music. His Piano Concerto is thus a significant landmark.

Even if that were not the case, however, the A minor Piano Concerto would be a marvel. Along with the Schumann Piano Concerto in the same key, with which it is frequently compared, Grieg's masterpiece holds court as the quintessential romantic concerto. His biographer John Horton calls it:

. . . the most satisfying and successful of Grieg's attempts at composing in the larger traditional forms, and the one that is generally agreed to be the most complete musical embodiment of Norwegian national Romanticism.

Like Schumann's concerto (which Grieg acknowledged he had studied carefully before embarking on his own), Grieg's opens with a dramatic flourish for the soloist. He also follows Schumann's lead by dispensing with the double exposition familiar in the Mozart concertos. Thenceforth, the two works differ. Where Schumann's first movement is monothematic, Grieg's has several distinct and contrasting theme groups, including a completely new melody that oboes and bassoons introduce in the coda. The pianist's cadenza dazzles with romantic/heroic passagework.

The second and third movements diverge more substantially from the Schumann-esque model. Grieg's Adagio settles the dust kicked up by the first movement. Muted strings introduce the lush key of D-flat major, joined first by bassoon, then upper winds, before the soloist enters. D-flat is a distinctly Chopin-esque key. Grieg's piano writing in the opening pages is unmistakably imprinted with the delicate filigree of his Polish predecessor; so too are his harmonic travels on this extraordinary and passionate journey.

The finale gives us the most prophetic glimpse of Grieg's Norwegian voice, with which he was to speak so eloquently during the next decades. Characterized by strong rhythmic profile and a fiery, even pagan spirit, this movement is a halling, a Norwegian folk dance that Grieg used in other works (including his Lyric Pieces for piano, Op.47). A switch to a relaxed and lyrical section takes romantic liberties. Indeed, the tempo changes have a great deal to do with the dramatic tension that makes the finale so effective.

Because he was the soloist at the premiere in 1869, Grieg undoubtedly sought opportunities for display. He dedicated the concerto to Edmund Neupert, who played the Copenhagen premiere in autumn 1869. The concerto did much to establish Grieg's international reputation, and he continued to

revise the orchestration until the last years of his life, refining the brass, and woodwind parts. We hear the 1906-1907 revised version.

The score calls for woodwinds in pairs, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, solo piano, and strings.

Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op.36

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born 16 December, 1770 in Bonn, Germany
Died 26 March, 1827 in Vienna, Austria

In summer 1802, Beethoven's physician sent him to Heiligenstadt, then a bucolic village outside Vienna, where he was instructed to rest his ears as much as possible. Tormented by the realization that he was losing his hearing altogether, Beethoven took long walks, pondered his fate, continued to compose and, in October, penned the passionate letter to his brothers that has become known as the "Heiligenstadt Testament." In this powerful document he recorded his despair at the cruel blow fate had dealt him, declaring that only his love for his art had prevented him from taking his own life.

Against this sobering backdrop, Beethoven completed the joyous strains of his Second Symphony, thereby confounding generations of armchair analysts determined to discern a direct correlation between the events of his life and their expression in his music. For Opus 36 is miraculously free of agony. Almost uniformly positive throughout, it wavers between pompous grandeur, relaxed contemplation, exuberant youthful energy, and unexpected humorous outbursts. Beethoven's grasp of the many facets of the human condition is aptly reflected in this lovely symphony. Little sign of his own personal tragedy invades the work, however.

A lengthy slow introduction opens the Second Symphony, larger in scope than any of Haydn's or Mozart's slow introductions. Many writers have perceived foreshadowing of the great "Choral" Symphony in this opening. Indeed, just as the symphony sits on the cusp of the 18th and 19th centuries, so does it bridge Beethoven's early and middle compositional periods. One part of him remains firmly rooted in classical tradition, while another part — his rebellious and curious side — moves beyond that tradition in ways that we now define as the romantic era. At the age of 32, Beethoven gives us remarkable breadth of musical vision within one symphony.

Beethoven takes his time in this introduction of almost three minutes. Once the Allegro con brio [fast, with vigor and spirit] arrives, we are off and running. Strong dance rhythms propel this music forward. Beethoven does not skimp on energy.

The slow movement Larghetto shows him at his most tender and intimate. Next is a Scherzo: Allegro, Trio, the first symphony in which Beethoven used the label Scherzo (Italian for "joke") instead of the eighteenth-century Menuetto (a sedate, courtly dance). He thereby altered the shape and character of the four movement symphony for the entire century to follow. The finale, starting with an orchestral exclamation point, is equally remarkable, with Haydn-esque wit and Beethovenian daring. Its extended coda presages the monumental coda of the Eroica, which would follow in 1803.

Beethoven's score calls for woodwinds, horns and trumpets in pairs; timpani and strings.

Expanded program notes are available on our website at westchesterphil.org.

Anne-Marie McDermott, piano

For over 25 years, Anne-Marie McDermott has played concertos, recitals and chamber music in hundreds of cities throughout the United States, Europe and Asia. A testimony to her curatorial imagination, she was appointed Artistic Director of the Vail Music Festival in 2011, as well as Curator for Chamber Music for the Mainly Mozart Festival.

The breadth of Ms. McDermott's repertoire reaches from Bach, Haydn, Beethoven, Rachmaninoff, Prokofiev, and Scriabin to works by today's most influential composers. Charles Wuorinen's last solo piano sonata was written for her and premiered at New York's Town Hall. Ms. McDermott has recorded the complete Prokofiev Piano Sonatas, Bach's English Suites and Partitas, solo works by Chopin, as well as Gershwin's complete works for piano and orchestra with the Dallas Symphony. In 2013, she released a disc of Mozart Concerti with the Calder Quartet that was praised by Gramophone as "exceptional on every count."

In recent seasons, Ms. McDermott has performed Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 2 with the New York Philharmonic and the Vancouver Symphony conducted by Bramwell Tovey, and returned to the Dallas Symphony playing Beethoven's Triple Concerto. Other recent orchestral highlights include a performance of Chopin's Piano Concerto in E minor with the Sao Paulo Symphony at the Cartagena Festival. In 2013, Ms. McDermott gave special performances of works by Wuorinen in New York and Washington in celebration of his 75th birthday. She has also appeared