the piano sparkles with bravura passages.

Brahms composed his first violin sonata during summer vacations in 1878 and 1879, in Pörtschach, Carinthia. In the opening movement (*Vicace non troppo*) a three-note motivic figure is introduced by the violin. This motive is organic to the structure of the entire sonata, as it appears in the second and third movements. It is somewhat disguised in the third movement, where it appears as a four-note theme. The appealing charm of the movement is heightened by Brahms' judicious use of one of his most glorious *cantabile* melodies. The second movement (*Adagio*) unfolds in tripartite form with a marked contrast between the introspective, visionary first part and the agitated second part. The third part summarizes with a return to material from the beginning of the movement, while at the same time featuring a cameo appearance of material from the second part. The finale (*Allegro molto moderato*) is a rondo that borrows a melody from Brahms' *Regentied (Rain Song)*, *Op. 59*, *No. 3*, and closes the sonata with a refined coda.

It was a performance of a Bach sonata by the eminent Hungarian-born American violinist Joseph Szigeti (1892–1973) that inspired Eugene Ysaÿe to write his own set of solo sonatas. His Six Sonatas for Solo Violin are not widely performed or extensively recorded. They are, however, in the words of music critic Richard Freed, "works [that] not only exploit the resources of the violin most eloquently, but [in addition] express the great-hearted artist's specific admiration and affection for six of his distinguished younger colleagues." The first sonata follows the pattern of the sonata da chiesa, or church sonata, that Bach adapted for his violin sonatas. The pattern consists of four movements with tempos alternating between slow and fast.

Being a professional violinist as well as a violist, Ottorino Respighi knew well the violin's capabilities and possibilities. His compositional mentors were Giuseppe Martucce, Max Bruch, and Nikolas Rimsky-Korsakov. To this list of mentors must be added Johannes Brahms, who did not personally tutor Respighi but whose compositional influence is evident. As Joseph Braustein illustrates in his critique of a performance of the work: "The sonata... betrays the marked influence of Brahms by virtue of its metrical and rhythmical irregularities: 3/4, 2/4, 9/8, and 7/8 meters follow each other measure by measure. This also occurs in the very expressive lyrical middle movement, which is characterized by constantly fluctuating harmonies. The last movement is a passacaglia that was evidently inspired by the finale of Brahms' Fourth Symphony."

Program notes by Elmer Booze

For the convenience of concertgoers the Garden Café remains open until 6:30 p.m.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed.

### The Fifty-eighth season of

# THE WILLIAM NELSON CROMWELL and F. LAMMOT BELIN CONCERTS

## National Gallery of Art



2327th Concert

# JAMES BUSWELL, violinist MENG-CHIEH LIU, pianist

Sunday Evening, 12 December 1999 Seven O'clock West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

### **PROGRAM**

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

Sonata in A Major, K. 526 (1787)

Allegro molto Andante Presto

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

Sonata No. 1 in G Major Op. 78 (1878–1879)

Vivace ma non troppo Adagio Allegro molto moderato

#### INTERMISSION

Eugène Ysaÿe (1858–1931)

Sonata No. 1 in G Minor for Solo Violin Op. 27 (1924)

Grave; lento assai Fugato: Molto moderato Allegretto poco scherzoso; amabile Finale con brio; allegro fermo

Ottorino Respighi (1879–1936)

Sonata in B Minor (1917)

Moderato Andante espressivo Passacaglia: Allegro moderato ma energico

As a pre-college student at the Juilliard School of Music, James Buswell was a pupil of the renowned violinist Ivan Galamian. It was at that time that he won first prize in the prestigious Merriwether Post Competition. Later he received a bachelor of arts degree from Harvard University with a major in early Renaissance painting and sculpture, while at the same time pursuing an active concert career. Buswell has appeared with virtually all the major orchestras in the United States and Canada, as well as with orchestras in Europe, Asia, and South America. He has collaborated with such distinguished conductors as Michael Tilson Thomas, Seiji Ozawa, Pierre Boulez, André Previn, Erich Leinsdorf, Zubin Mehta, George Szell, and Leonard Bernstein. In addition, Buswell has toured extensively with such eminent colleagues as Leslie Parnas, Lee Luvisi, Yo-Yo Ma, Walter Trampler, Stephen Isserlis, and Emanuel Ax. James Buswell teaches at the New England Conservatory in Boston, and is artist-in-residence and visiting professor at Harvard University and Amherst College, respectively. He appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Michal Schmidt Artists International, Inc., of New York City.

Born in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, pianist Meng-Chieh Liu is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia and is currently its youngest faculty member. He studied with the late Jorge Bolet, Claude Frank, and Eleanor Sokoloff. Liu was just entering his teens when he came to international attention as winner of the first Asia Pacific Piano Competition. After winning first prizes in the Mieczyslaw Munz and Igor Stravinsky competitions, Liu undertook an extensive recital tour. His New York orchestral debut took place in 1991. His career was interrupted in 1993 by a rare and debilitating illness, during the course of which his doctors prepared him for the probability that he would never play again. Fortunately, they were wrong, and by 1995 he was back on stage, playing his Washington debut at the Kennedy Center. His Philadelphia recital in October 1998 was hailed by critics as "a glorious comeback."

Considered a precursor of Beethoven's "Kreuzer" Sonata, Mozart's Sonata in A Major, K. 526 (his penultimate violin sonata) was written while he was also working on his opera, Don Giovanni. The first movement of the sonata (Allegro molto) is a supreme example of Mozart's maturity as a master of the sectional structure of the sonata-allegro form. The thematic and rhythmic complexities of the three segments (exposition, development, and recapitulation) are masterfully worked out with enchanting themes that interweave from one section to another. The second movement (Andante) is both rapturous and inspirational, and, in the words of Mozart biographer Alfred Einstein, attains an "equilibrium of art and soul." The finale (Presto), in rondo form, spotlights both instruments. The violin utilizes quarter notes steeped in emotional and poetic expression, while