

Simeon Bellison, *clarinet*

Roth String Quartet & Julius Chajes, *piano*

MOZART: Quintet for Clarinet & String Quartet

MOZART/arr.Bellison: Concert Rondo for Clarinet & Piano

BEETHOVEN/arr.Bellison: Don Giovanni Variations for Clarinet & Piano

Reminiscences on Simeon Bellison

“Mr. Bellison started the lesson with a cup of hot tea – Russian style. He usually was seated in an easy chair and the pupil stood playing his lesson. Not before long, he would be up guiding the pupil with his phrasing of the piece. He would sing, he never brought out his Oehler clarinets, and mark up the music so that the exact design of the phrase was clearly understood. He was most effective with the cadenzas and recitatives. The drama, with its contrasts of dynamics and tension, was visably shown. For him, clarinet playing was foremost a thing of expression and feeling. His pupils could not help but play the clarinet beautifully for it was exciting and they grew to love music. His remarkable musicianship and personal warmth, I will never forget.”

Kalman Bloch

“I remember Mr. Bellison as an artist of great dignity and sincerity. Always very much concerned with the expressive possibilities of the clarinet, he was, I believe, most influential in helping set the standards of good taste for our instrument. I feel fortunate in having his guidance towards understanding and appreciating the role of the clarinet in music”

Charles Russo

“Every lesson with Bellison was a great musical inspiration and revelation of the composer’s intent. He would take the most insignificant work and make a masterpiece of it through his superb musicianship and interpretations. He impressed upon his students that it is the greatest piece at the time of performance. Bellison was an eloquent gentleman, superb artist and a noble man. He had a keen sense of humor and an awareness of the world around him. His was a unique and unrivaled sound.”

Sidney Forrest

Excerpts of liner notes from:

A Recital of Rarely Heard Music for Clarinet & Piano

Mozart/Bellison: Concert Rondo in B flat Major – This attractive composition was written in 1772 while Mozart was in Vienna. Under the date of March 23rd of that year he wrote to his father: “I am sending you at the same time the last Rondo I composed, which is making a sensation in Vienna. But I beg you to guard it **like a jewel**, and not give it to a soul to play.”

Writing from Vienna about about a year later, Mozart again mentioned this music to his father. He had played it as part of a Piano Concerto at a concert given by his sister-in-law, the soprano, Mme. Lange (who appeared as a character in his comic opera, *The Impresario*). Again the Rondo made a deep impression upon the ‘cordial’ Viennese public and Mozart has to come back and repeat it when “the audience would not stop clapping,” after which there was “a regular torrent of applause.”

The Bellison arrangement of the Rondo for clarinet & piano sounds like an original composition rather than a transcription. Actually, it is more effective as clarinet music than in the form in which it was written by the composer. Mr. Bellison introduces a brilliant variation in the form of a cadenza using material from Mozart’s other works to display technique and phrasing and the great flexibility of the clarinet.

The first performance of the Rondo with Mr. Bellison as soloist was given by the New York Philharmonic Symphony Society in Carnegie Hall on March 17, 1940.

Beethoven/Bellison: Variations on a Theme by Mozart from Don Giovanni – The theme of this composition is the familiar *La Ci Darem la Mano*. Beethoven gave it a set of variations in 1795, when he wrote two Trios for English horn and two oboes. At this time, he was quite interested in woodwind instruments and he wrote a great many of his better known compositions for small groups of mixed strings and woodwinds. Of the two Trios, the variations on *La Ci Darem la Mano* is more rarely performed as it never been arranged for any other than the original instrumentation until now. It is also interesting to know that this charming work of the young Beethoven has never been given an Opus number.

In the Bellison arrangement, the oboe quality becomes mellowed by the more musical tone of the clarinet, although the original effect of the woodwind ensemble is skillfully maintained. There are dramatic

as well as poetic moments in the Beethoven Variations and the demands upon the performer's technique and musicianship are considerable in the individual treatment given to these classic materials by Mr. Bellison. From notes by Sigmund Spaeth

Mozart Quintet was originally recorded in 1937 with the **Roth String Quartet**
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