

Norbert Brainin brings classical beauty to Boston concert

by Hartmut Cramer

The recital that world-famous violinist Norbert Brainin and leading German pianist Günter Ludwig gave on Friday, Dec. 4 in Boston at the New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, was extraordinary in many respects.

First, because Brainin, the first violinist of the legendary Amadeus Quartet, had the courage to dedicate this concert explicitly to his friend, Lyndon LaRouche, at a time when the American presidential candidate is being subjected to a political witchhunt in clear violation of the U.S. Constitution.

Second, Brainin, with the excellent collaboration of Ludwig, performed some of the greatest classical sonatas for piano and violin in the most truthful and beautiful way possible.

Brainin's violin, a precious Stradivarius built in 1725 (named "the Chaconne" because the great German violinist Joseph Joachim used to play Bach's Chaconne only on it) sang beautifully throughout the performance. This was true, whether in the magnificent cantabile lines of the Adagio in Mozart's Sonata in E-Flat Major (KV 481) and throughout Brahms's lyrical Sonata No. 1 in G Major (Op. 78), or in the extremely dramatic passages of Beethoven's Kreutzer Sonata (which is actually a concerto, as Beethoven himself wrote in the manuscript).

Breathtaking beauty

The outright beauty, irony, and poetry of the Mozart and Brahms sonatas left an attentive audience almost breathless, but what Brainin and Ludwig accomplished after the intermission, was simply a miracle. They were able to create the whole tension of Beethoven's extraordinarily difficult Kreutzer Sonata, from the first few opening bars, the Adagio sostenuto: The violin started alone, reflective, forceful, but not too loud; the piano answered powerfully, energetically,

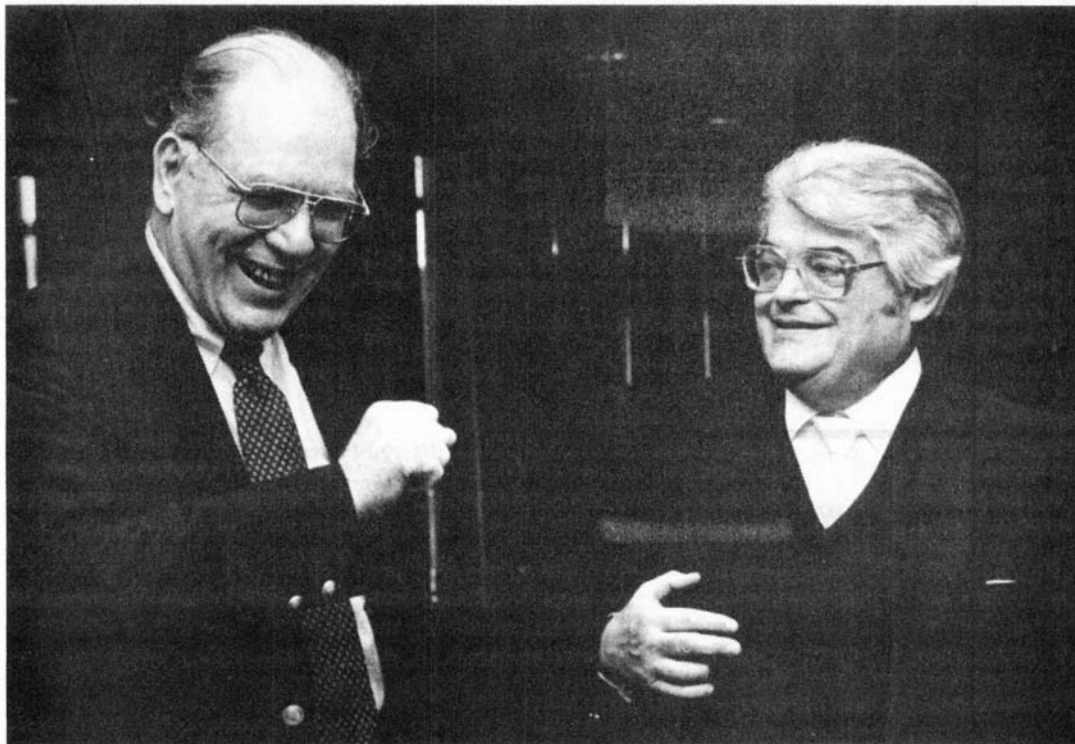
then calmed down in order to create the necessary positive tension before the stormy beginning of the following Presto, which showed both the composer and the artists as being capable of mastering all ranges of human emotion. This classical art of shaping musical passages and creating musical developments immediately reminds one of the great German conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler, who was an absolute master in this respect.

Add to this, the fact that Brainin and Ludwig engaged in a beautiful musical dialogue during the whole performance, and that they brilliantly mastered all technical difficulties as if there were none, thus demonstrating a complete freedom of action, and you have the most exciting concert possible.

The audience responded with a standing ovation and—as if to prove right the expectation expressed by a speaker from the international Commission to Investigate Human Rights Violations, which sponsored the concert, that "the power of reason and beauty will always prevail if man responds morally"—the audience demanded an encore.

The artists played the Adagio cantabile, the second movement of Beethoven's famous C-Minor Sonata (Op. 30, 2) so beautifully and movingly, that the audience, clearly ennobled by the performance, honored it with a pointedly long silence after the last tone had faded away, in order to celebrate the outstanding accomplishment even more enthusiastically.

Hartmut Cramer, a German spokesman for the Commission to Investigate Human Rights Violations, and himself an accomplished musician, introduced the program, saying, "It is this very Constitution of the United States of America, which is admired most by all people all over the world, who are concerned with the securing of political freedom, human dignity and the Inalienable Rights of Man, first established in the 1776 Declaration of Independence. Freedom, dignity of man, and natural law are not only the fundamentals of our



Philip Ulanowsky

Norbert Brainin (right), with Lyndon LaRouche, at a reception in Brainin's honor in Boston on Dec. 4 following his concert.

great Judeo-Christian—that is, Western—civilization, but they are also reflected in every great work of art, worthy of that name.

“Tonight, we will all participate in one of the most beautiful examples of this humanist principle: classical music. There is simply no better way to celebrate those principles than through beautiful music; music, which transcends all borders, is unfettered by languages and flows directly from heart to heart with the aim of ennobling people. Thereby, classical, beautiful music belongs to all people and is truly universal.”

The audience of 600 people, some of whom had come from as far away as Montreal, Canada, and who were, by and large, people not normally classed as “concert-goers,” thus proved in an extraordinarily moving way, that the great poet of freedom, Friedrich Schiller, was right when he wrote at the time of the American Revolution:

“The theater is the common channel through which the light of wisdom streams down from the thoughtful, better part of society, spreading thence in mild beams throughout the entire state: More correct notions, more refined precepts, purer emotions flow from here into the veins of the population; the clouds of barbarism and gloomy superstition disperse, night yields to triumphant light!”

This might sound like a miracle to many, but that Friday night it came true in Boston.

The Boston Globe published the following review on Dec. 5.

Jordan Hall last night was the scene of an extraordinarily rewarding recital by Norbert Brainin, former first violinist

with the legendary Amadeus Quartet.

As chamber music lovers around the world know, the Amadeus recently disbanded after nearly 40 years together following the death of violist Peter Schidlof in mid-August. Its tradition was one of the world's proudest, distinguished by a devotion to the masterworks of the classical literature (the quartet has recorded only Beethoven, Brahms, Haydn, Mozart and Schubert), a concern for simultaneous richness of detail and breadth of line, and a sense of eager, enlightened and humanistic interchange.

Happily, Brainin's concert made clear that the quartet's legacy will live on through the individual efforts of its surviving members. Sponsored by the Commission to Investigate Human Rights Violations, “dedicated to Mr. Brainin's good friend Lyndon H. LaRouche,” and presented with the admirable collaboration of pianist Ludwig, last night's spread consisted, not surprisingly, of a collection of repertory heavyweights.

But what a richly jewelled carpet it was. In Mozart's E-flat Sonata K. 481, one marvelled at Brainin's expressive (and judicious) use of portamento, his directly communicative tone, and his engagingly conversational approach, whether in the delicately inflected cantabile lines of the second movement or the gregarious extroversion of the concluding allegretto. In the outer movements of Brahms's G-major Sonata, one was captivated by the deep and lively wisdom in every phrase, and in the adagio by its magnificent landscape of pastoral calm and divine purpose. And Beethoven's “Kreutzer” bristled with drama and dimension, passion and purpose. . . .