

- July 24 -

PROGRAM

Piano Quartet in G minor, K.478 (1785)

Allegro
Andante
Rondo

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

Nancy Bean, violin
Cyrus Beroukhim, viola
Alberto Parrini, cello
Marcantonio Barone, piano

Midsummer Moon for Violin and Piano

Rebecca Clarke
(1886-1979)

Emily Daggett Smith, violin
Marcantonio Barone, piano

INTERMISSION

String Sextet No. 1 in B-Flat Major, Op. 18 (1859-60)

Allegro, ma non troppo
Thema con variazione: Andante, ma moderato
Scherzo: Allegro molto
Rondo: Poco allegretto e grazioso

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Nancy Bean, violin
Emily Daggett Smith, violin
Cyrus Beroukhim, viola
William Frampton, viola
Alberto Parrini, cello
Lloyd Smith, cello

PROGRAM NOTES

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791): Quartet for Piano, Violin, Viola and Cello in G Minor, K.478 (1785)

The G minor Piano Quartet is a key work in the evolution of chamber music. Up to this point, whenever the piano was used it played a dominating role as, for example, in the Haydn piano trios or the Mozart sonatas for the piano and violin in which the violin accompanied the piano. With this work, the approach changed to dialogue between equal partners. This quartet is the first of a projected set of three piano quartets commissioned by the music publisher, Franz Anton Hoffmeister. This new style of chamber music did not appeal to the musical public. They did not buy. Hoffmeister made a present of the fee for the three quartets with the condition that Mozart not write the last two. Undoubtedly this is the only time Mozart was paid for not doing something. Later Mozart did write another piano quartet that appeared under the imprint of another publisher.

This combination of instruments was new to the public. The only notable predecessors are modest works by Johann Christian Bach and Johann Schobert. It is well to recall the role of keyboard instruments in chamber music before Mozart's time. The chief vehicle was the trio sonata dominated by two violins with a harpsichord filling in the harmony, giving a degree of rhythmic movement and supplying a bass-line augmented by a cello.

This is music of depth and earnestness—not merely music of politeness and sociability. This is evident at once in the terse unison passage that opens and closes the first movement. This is as much a “fate” motif as that which opens the Beethoven Fifth Symphony. A notable feature of the first movement is the frequent use of canonic writing, especially between the viola and the violin. The plan of the movement is a sonata form that is unusual in that the second group does not reappear in the recapitulation. The second movement is an andante with a typical Mozartian “singing” melody. It is a sonatina, which is a sonata form without development. The last movement, in a mood of jubilation in G major, is a rondo with development.

The Vienna Journal des Luxus und Moden (1788) has these comments: “...The report ‘Mozart has written a new and very remarkable quartet, and such or such princess possesses it and plays it!’...Many pieces can sustain their reputation even under a mediocre performance, but this work of Mozart's..., carelessly rendered, is simply unendurable...What a contrast if this masterpiece were to be performed by four skilled musicians in a quiet room, where the listening ear might catch the suspension of every note in the presence of only two or three attentive listeners! But this would give no opportunity for display or the applause of the vulgar.” This, of course, reminds us of the original concept of chamber music. It was primarily for the enjoyment of the players and a few friends at a time when, if music was wanted, it had to be made with people—real people.

– Hoyle Carpenter

REBECCA CLARKE (1886-1979): *Midsummer Moon for Violin and Piano* (1924)

Rebecca Helferich Clarke, born in Harrow, England in 1886, is considered one of the most important British composers in the interwar period between World War I and World War II and the most distinguished British female composer of her generation. As with many female composers/musicians of her generation, the paths of her life and career were strongly affected by her gender. Beginning violin studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London, she was pulled out by her father after being proposed to by her teacher. (There is a silver lining here: that teacher left her his Stradivarius in his will). Subsequently she attended the Royal College of Music, switched to the viola, and became one of its first female composition students.

Relations with her father were always strained, and in 1910 she left home, supporting herself through her viola playing, performing throughout Great Britain, Europe, and the United States as a self-styled “viola player and composer.” She moved to the United States in 1916, where she died in 1979 at her home in New York City.

Clarke's music incorporates simplicity and peacefulness as well as complex rhythms with stormy outbursts. The impressionist music of Debussy is often mentioned in connection with her work, with lush textures and modernistic harmonies. Although she composed many works embracing complex musical ideas and ambiguous tonalities, “Midsummer Moon,” in contrast, is a light miniature. It boasts a marvelous flutter-like solo violin line, one of the best evocations of a nightingale in the business.

– Steve Siegel

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897): *String Sextet No. 1 in B-Flat Major, Op. 18* (1859-60)

It took ten years for this sextet to finally reach Moscow. Its performance provided an occasion for Tchaikovsky to launch a tirade against Brahms. This lack of appreciation can probably be attributed to his vastly different individuality and genius—to a nature opposed to his own. Unlike Wagner, Brahms did not bother to defend himself through literary efforts. He simply busied himself with being himself and turning out more examples of great music.

The sextet is Brahms’ second chamber music work, being preceded only by the first piano trio. When the well-established medium of the string quartet was exceeded, a new element was added—that of a large mass of tone rather than individual contributions of single instruments. This is not a fault—it is simply a difference.

The first movement is a sonata form with three themes, with the second being in an unusual key—a half-step lower than the first. The third is in its normal place—the fifth step of the tonic key. The second movement is a series of variations on a folk-like theme. The treatment brings to mind the Baroque chaconne. The following scherzo is a joyful energetic interlude. The finale is a rondo with a Haydnesque theme with some developmental treatment of the material. There are other evident influences. The scherzo recalls Beethoven. The landler-like second theme of the first movement suggests the Vienna of Schubert. But these are not mere imitations. Here the young Brahms is becoming his own man and a worthy successor to the masters of the recent past.

– Hoyle Carpenter

- July 31 -

PROGRAM

Sonata No. 2 in A Major for Violin and Piano (c.1770)
Allegro moderato
Andantino - Minore Allegro

Joseph Bologne
(1745-1799)

Katie Hyun, violin
Marcantonio Barone, piano

String Quartet in G minor, Op. 27 (1878)
Un poco Andante – Allegro molto ed agitato
Romanze: Andantino
Interzezzo: Allegro molto marcato
Finale: Lento – Presto al Saltarello

Edvard Grieg
(1843-1907)

Cyrus Beroukhim, violin
Katie Hyun, violin
Dana Kelley, viola
Alberto Parrini, cello

INTERMISSION

Piano Trio in B Flat Major, Op. 97 (Archduke)
Allegro moderato
Scherzo: Allegro
Andante cantabile, ma però con moto – Poco più adagio
Allegro moderato – Più presto

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Cyrus Beroukhim, violin
Alberto Parrini, cello
Marcantonio Barone, piano

PROGRAM NOTES

JOSEPH BOLOGNE (1745-1799): Sonata no.2 in A Major for Violin and Piano (1781)

Few musicians have led a life as fascinating and multifaceted as Joseph Bologne's, commonly referred to by his title Le Chevalier de Saint-Georges. Born in 1745 in the French colony of Guadeloupe, his father was a French plantation owner and his mother a black islander. When he was still quite young, his father took him to Paris (his mother joined them a couple of years later) where he excelled at his studies. At age 21, he earned the title of chevalier (knight).

Bologne cut an impressive figure throughout Parisian high society, and was revered for his skills in dancing, horsemanship, and above all, fencing. In fact, it came as a great shock when, in 1769, he began to play in the violin section in François-Joseph Gossec's orchestra, Le Concert des Amateurs. It was an absolute sensation when he appeared in 1772 as the soloist for his own violin concertos, with Gossec as conductor. In 1773 he would become this orchestra's concertmaster and conductor. As his renown grew, he eventually became a candidate for the position of director of the Paris Opera. Sadly, politics involving a group of musicians and dancers prevented his appointment.

Although Bologne was a prolific composer, very little is known about his musical training. His first documented compositions are from 1770 and '71, and demonstrate a commitment to the new and unexplored. His three sonatas for keyboard and violin feature those instruments as equals, breaking away from the Baroque tradition of basso continuo, which was still very much in vogue. His harmonies, textures and formal schemes place him within a Classical style that was still in the process of forming. The title page of the three sonatas by Saint-Georges published in Paris in 1781 read, "*Pour le Clavecin ou Forté Piano avec Accompagnement de Violon Obligé*". Bologne's A major Sonata begins with three emphatic, repeated chords, a technique known as *premier coup d'archet* ("first stroke of the bow"), which was favored in Paris as a sort of "call to order" announcing the start of the performance. Mozart and even Beethoven used a similar device.

Today Bologne is best remembered as the first known classical composer of African ancestry.

—Steve Siegel

EDVARD GRIEG (1845-1907): String Quartet No. 1 in G minor, Op. 27 (1878)

Edvard Grieg was, at heart, a miniaturist. His personal correspondence indicates he was not comfortable working in the large scale of the sonata form, preferring instead smaller pieces such as his celebrated art songs and Romantic piano miniatures. As a result, he produced only one complete string quartet, the String Quartet in G minor, Op. 27, dating from 1878 when he was 35. While it might have been a challenge for him to write, it is an exceedingly attractive and untroubled work to hear, with a melodic spirit that recalls his best songs or piano works.

It is also one of the most original and influential string quartets of the late 19th century, and even managed to impress the aloof Debussy who, fifteen years later wrote his only quartet in the same key, with more than a few striking similarities. Grieg's musical language was progressive for its time, particularly within the generally conservative genre of the string quartet. Highly chromatic with rich harmonies and bold modulations, the music explores modal and pentatonic scales with an exotic folk flavor.

Like many composers, Grieg borrows from his own music for the main theme of the quartet: a portion of his somber song "Spillamæd" (Minstrels). There are at least eight variations on the theme in the first movement alone before it spills into the second, reappears in the third, and frames the fourth. If the first movement sounds rather stormy, the

sun breaks through the clouds by the second, and the rustic spice of Norwegian peasant dances warms us in the scherzo.

Grieg's quartet is remarkable in the way it moves, with an astonishing rhythmic vitality and the constant impulse to dance. It is, in short, a lovable work, heartwarming in the way that Grieg's music so often is.

—Steve Siegel

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827): Piano Trio in B-Flat “Archduke,” Op. 97 (1811)

From the Penguin Book on Chamber Music: “...dedicated to Archduke Rudolph, younger brother of the Emperor of Austria, and a keen amateur musician...a portly, unattractive young man who took lessons from Beethoven from 1803 to 1806, composed a little, and played the piano well-enough to tackle some of Beethoven's concertos. Nearly all the Hapsburgs were musical, a fact which did much to establish Vienna's position as the chief music center of Europe. The Archduke was fully capable of distinguishing between Beethoven's greater and lesser works and was observed to show displeasure when a masterpiece was dedicated to someone else. He should be remembered with gratitude for having organized an annuity for Beethoven in 1809, which kept him from want.”

The trio opens with a full-blown melody rather than one built of fragments (e.g. Fifth Symphony), departing from his more usual practice. It is a noble, spacious statement that establishes the mood of the whole work. The Scherzo is an innocently good-natured piece, having nothing of the sinister quality of many Beethoven Scherzi (e.g. Eroica Symphony). The shift from the key of B-flat to D at the third movement gives a warm glowing effect. It is a theme with four variations and a coda. The last movement enters without a break. It returns to the key of B-flat, with some leaning toward the subdominant E-flat for a while. The sudden change of tempo, dynamics and manner are something of a shock. The form is a rondo. Tovey describes it vividly: “The outrageous jocularly continues unabashed...it is a marvelous study in Bacchanalian indolence.”

— Hoyle Carpenter