

# FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

## **The Ahn Trio**

Lucia Ahn, piano  
Angella Ahn, violin  
Maria Ahn, cello

October 7, 2001

Faye Spanos Concert Hall  
University of the Pacific  
Stockton, California



## **Program**

### **Piano Trio No. 6 in G Major, K 564**

Allegro  
Andante, Variation I-IV  
Allegretto

### **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

(1756-1791)

### **Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano (c 1937)**

Adagio non troppo—Allegro vivace  
Tempo di marcia  
Largo—Allegro vivo e molto ritmico

### **Leonard Bernstein**

(1918-1990)

*—Intermission—*

### **Piano Trio in G Minor, Op. 15, B 96**

Moderato assai  
Allegro, ma non agitato  
Finale: Presto

### **Bedřich Smetana**

(1824-1884)



The Ahn Trio appears by arrangement with Joanne Rile Artists Management, Inc.  
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## The Ahn Trio

Once upon a time in Korea were born a pair of twins, Maria and Lucia Ahn, followed two years later by their sister Angella. All three played the piano but when Lucia got really serious about the keyboard, Angella moved to the violin and Maria to the cello.

The three Seoul sisters became the Ahn Trio, making their first public ensemble appearance on Korean television in 1979. They enrolled at the Julliard School in 1981 and were brought to the attention of American audiences in a 1987 *Time Magazine* story about "Asian American Whiz Kids" and through NBC coverage of the Seoul Olympics. Soon followed features in *Vogue*, *GQ*, *The New York Times*, and appearances on The Oxygen Channel and PBS.

The trio has played engagements all over the U.S., such as Alice Tully Hall, Virginia's Wolf Trap, and the 92nd St. "Y" in New York. Caribbean and South American tours, European outings, and appearances in Asia have also kept the three sisters on the move. Wherever they play, the Ahns offer workshops and master classes for students, just as they do when back home with the Lincoln Center Institute.

The Ahn Trio has recordings of Ravel, Villa-Lobos, Dvorak, Bernstein, Suk, and Shostakovich trios and they are the recipients of Germany's prestigious ECHO Award. The Ahn Trio premiered Eric Ewazen's "The Diamond World" and Kenji Bunch's "Concerto for Piano Trio." They also feature works of contemporary composers such as Michael Nyman, Paul Schoenfield, and John Musto. New commissions will include a work by Ewazen for the Villa Montalvo Center of the Arts and a composition for the Trio and dancers by Bunch.

## Program Notes

### *Mozart—Piano Trio in G Major*

Mozart's trio of 1788 was composed during a period of renewed interest in the popular forms of keyboard chamber music and during the time that he composed his last three great symphonies.

He had written a keyboard trio (Divertimento, K 254) in Salzburg in

1776 and the greatest difference between it and the Trio in G (K 564) is the emancipation of the cello part. The cello had been used to double the piano's bass part. The piano at the end of the eighteenth century was still in its experimental stage; the bass was thin and weak and the sustaining power was poor so chamber groups used the cello to reinforce the bass. The violin was the instrument given the most important place, the singing out of the themes. The contemporary piano was incapable alone of the powerful effects that Haydn and Mozart needed for their most imaginative works and they turned to chamber works which grew in complexity and sophistication. The thinner sound of the violin in Mozart's day blended more easily with the metallic sonority of the contemporary piano, and made it possible for each to accompany the other without strain. The challenge for today's groups is to find the balance and blend on modern instruments.

The development of the piano was stimulated by the music being written at the period and by the large number of amateur musicians of a caliber that differed little from that of the professionals. Serious music making took place in the palaces of the nobility and the drawing rooms of the bourgeoisie. Mozart participated in these, including the popular Sunday performances sponsored by Baron van Swieten. Many find the dialogue between the instruments a mirror of the fashionable etiquette of social intercourse at these events. One direction specified that one should conduct oneself "in the manner that will give the most pleasure to others, and it is therefore essential to speak only in order to give them the opportunity to speak in turn."

An abrupt stroke on the cello and the Trio in G is off. The piano plays the spirited theme and then accompanies the violin with virtuosic enthusiasm. The violin offers a second rollicking theme, answered by the piano. On the return of the themes the cello becomes more apparent with emphatic comments and a pedal at one point. After a rather plaintive section, the cello becomes even more audible and

contributes some rather strident notes in the recapitulation.

The third movement is in rondo form with a happy dotted motif presented by the piano, taken up by the violin over a waltz beat. The episodes vary from the very active, full dialogue *a trois* to slower, lighter passages. There seems to be a build up to a final burst of sound, but instead, the trio ends with a polite bow.

### *Bernstein—Piano Trio*

To admirers of Leonard Bernstein, the musical paragon of Americana, it might come as a surprise that he should write a classical trio. Would it contain the heavy, syncopated rhythms of the symphonic dances of *West Side Story*, or the lyricism of its songs? Or the off-balance rhythm of *Candide*, or its brilliant coloratura? Or the pathos and nostalgia of his symphony *Jeremiah* based on the biblical text? Why would this outstanding conductor—the only guest conductor to lead the Vienna Philharmonic during the reign of von Karajan, and the man who conducted Beethoven's Ninth symphony to celebrate the fall of the Berlin Wall—bother with a trio? And when would the writer and presenter of fifty-three educational programs on TV find time to compose a trio?

He didn't of course. He wrote his one trio, the second of his formal compositions, while he was a junior studying music at Harvard.

Bernstein's early music experiences consisted of listening to the neighbor's piano with his ear pressed to the wall. And in crying till his mother would play Jewish cantors or popular songs of the day on the Victrola. And then his Aunt Clara gave the family her piano. Lenny remembers "touching this thing the day it arrived, just stroking it and going mad. I knew, from that moment to this, that music was 'it.'" He was given lessons and improvised on one of the liturgical Jewish chants, playing it in the style of Bach, Mozart, and Chopin. The Rabbi was not amused. His extraordinary

intellectual gifts and explosive musical talents won him many friends, who would present their own versions of musicals, *Carmen* being a favorite, with Lenny playing the part of Carmen. One of these friends, Mildred Spiegel, became his musical alter ego at Harvard and was a stabilizing influence on his dynamism: she taught him to use the metronome. She was his partner in four-hand and two-piano performances. She was the recipient of the program of Bernstein's performance of the Ravel Piano Concerto at Sanders Theater, Cambridge with the State Symphony Orchestra. He crossed out "State" and replaced it with "Boston," and changed the conductor's name to Serge Koussevitzky—a revelation of where his sights were focused. At the time, Bernstein was studying with Gebhard, and this presentation did not go unnoticed.

But Bernstein's real aspirations were for the authentically classical. He was educated at Boston Latin where he added German to his Hebrew and Latin. At Harvard he studied Plato and the Greek philosophers. So it should not be a surprise when his trio was presented at Harvard in 1937 with Mildred Spiegel playing violin and Bernstein at the piano. It is rarely heard, and we are privileged to be able to do so.

As producer Max Wilcox adds, the Trio "is more than the work of a gifted student. It is partially influenced by the young composer's familiarity with a great range of existing music, but the seeds of Bernstein's musical personality are already clearly in evidence. The jazzy second movement is in the style that Bernstein would use to such great effect in his mature theater and concert pieces. *West Side Story* obviously came from the same musical brain. I somehow imagine the mature Bernstein might not have been too unhappy looking back on this colorful music of his youth."

### **Smetana—Piano Trio in G Minor**

Though Smetana was the "Father of Czech Music," he was not that to Bohemian musical life where music impregnated society. Bohemians with slight changes of name populated the orchestras of Europe. Bohemia had a long and colorful history, first settled in the sixth century, and then in turn dominated by the Magyars, the Poles, and the Austrians. Smetana joined the

patriotic cause, as Bohemia was caught in the surge of nationalist fervor that culminated in the uprisings against Austria in 1848. Smetana accepted a post as conductor in Sweden and only on his return to Bohemia in 1861 did he take up the cause of nationalistic music, writing his most famous tone poem, *Ma Vlast (My Country)*, from which the musical descriptive of its river, *The Moldau*, is most often played.

Smetana was a self-taught genius whose models were Beethoven, Schumann, and Chopin. He felt an affinity for the subjective passionate nature of Schumann, and his piano style was modelled on Chopin with its power and refinement.

It was in the oppressive atmosphere after the rebellions of 1848 before Smetana left for Sweden, that the tragic death of his young daughter added grief to the feeling of futility the nation was enduring. This produced in 1855 his first and one of his greatest artistic productions, termed a "magnificent" expression of terrible suffering by his biographer Nejdly.

The first phrase, introduced with a violin solo, is a despairing cry. The second, a cello solo, is a tender expression, as if of sad memories. A contrapuntal development leads to a piano cadenza, tempo rubato, a bell-like theme related to the opening melody. An active thickening of texture follows its return, and after a delicate lament from the violin an accelerando leads to an emphatic ending.

A scherzo replaces the customary slow movement. The theme has been said to be a tribute to the lighthearted spirit of a young child. There are two trios: a melodic Andante and a Maestoso, which is a much stronger statement alternating with a quieter lament.

A similar contrast of mood is found in the rondo finale. The galloping rondo subject alternates with a slow, poignant theme introduced by the cello. This music develops into a funeral march on its second appearance. A seeming effort to shake off this mood with the return of the Tempo I dissipates and is cut off with abrupt final chords.

—Notes by Catherine Roche

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*Presented in Cooperation with University of the Pacific and the UOP Conservatory of Music; Stephen Anderson, Dean*

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3:00 PM Sunday, October 7, 2001

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

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### **Westwind Brass Quintet**

3:00 PM Sunday, November 18, 2001

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### **Ying Quartet**

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### **Miró String Quartet**

6:00 PM Saturday, March 16, 2002

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### **American String Quartet**

3:00 PM Sunday, April 7, 2002

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

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