

FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

Osiris Piano Trio

Tinta Schmidt von Altenstadt, violin
Larissa Groeneveld, cello
Ellen Corver, piano

2:30 PM, February 20, 2005

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

In cooperation with the University of the Pacific
Conservatory of Music
Stockton, California



Program

Piano Trio No. 11 in G Major, Op. 121a **Ludwig van Beethoven**
(10 variations on "Ich bin der Schneider Kakadu") (1770-1827)

Three Nocturnes (1924) **Ernest Bloch**
I. Andante (1880-1924)
II. Andante quieto
III. Tempestoso—Calmo—Maestoso—Con moto

Piano Trio on Irish Folk Tunes (1925) **Frank Martin**
Allegro (1890-1974)
Adagio
Gigue

—Intermission—

Piano Trio No. 3 in F minor, Op. 65, B130 **Antonín Dvořák**
Allegro ma non troppo—Poco piu mosso, quasi vivace (1841-1904)
Allegro grazioso—Meno mosso
Poco adagio
Finale: Allegro con brio—Meno mosso—Vivace



THE OSIRIS PIANO TRIO appears by arrangement with Lisa Sapinkopf Artists
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The Osiris Piano Trio

Founded in 1988 following their successful performance in the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Recital Hall, the trio was awarded the Philip Morris Finest Selection prize in their third season. In 1997, they received the Annie Bosboom Prize to further their international career.

The Osiris Trio made their American debut in 1997 with a performance in Carnegie Recital Hall where they were praised by the New York Times for their “edgy brilliance” and “largeness in every dimension of color, dynamic range and expression.” Their Canadian debut in 2002 was hailed as “incandescent and revelatory.” They have performed in the Netherlands, France, England, Germany, Japan, Australia, Scandinavia, Iceland, Estonia, and South Africa. Concerts given as part of the Rising Stars series of the European Concert Halls Organization took the trio to the major European concert stages.

Program Notes

Beethoven—Kakadu Variations

Before the present electronic culture, people celebrated popular music in their homes using the piano and strings. The piano trio evolved from such amateur status but Beethoven knew that to use the trio for variations on popular music was lucrative. Such pieces were important as well for displaying pianistic effects and instrumental virtuosity. Beethoven composed Opus 121a, variations on the song “I am the tailor Cockatoo,” when the tune was a favorite. The tune was from the operetta “The Sisters of Prague” by Wenzell Müller, which was presented on the stage of the Leopoldstadt in Vienna in 1794 and performed 136 times. Thus the gentleman, Cockatoo, proclaims his trade as did Papageno in Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*: “Der Vogellanger bin ich.” The variations appeared in print only in 1824 though they may have been written as early as 1804 and probably revised around 1817.

All the instruments are given important and virtuosic parts in the variations, as Beethoven had already done in his earlier trios. After a slow, serious, and portentous introduction, elements of the banal theme are presented (a delicious anti-climax) and the theme is given ten variations with ingenious transformations.

The violin states Variation I over piano accompaniment, then in the cello with a violin obbligato, and finally as a dialogue of the two strings over piano accompaniment. The violin and cello answer each other with emphatic passages over a running accompaniment in Variation II. We hear the violin and cello in dialogue in Variation III with very low chords from the piano. A slow ending leads to a peppery Variation IV with all instruments presenting the theme in rhythmic staccato. In Variation V the piano playing alone hides the theme in figurations. Accompanied violin begins Variation VI, followed by the cello and then a dialogue of the two over very active piano accompaniment. Variation VII presents the violin and cello, unaccompanied, in lush melodic polyphony. The violin and cello play interchangeably, in sharp contrasting exchanges in Variation VIII, but Variation IX is an *Adagio*, a new sphere of expression. Variation X reverts to the original theme, *Presto*, in 6/8 time, a fugue in the minor key. It becomes a free *Allegretto* and ends with a welter of 32nd notes on the piano.

Bloch—Three Nocturnes

Born in Switzerland, Bloch was becoming internationally famous when he immigrated to America in 1917 after studying and working in Germany and Paris. During his intensive artistic career in the United States, he directed both the Cleveland Institute and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

Bloch had received a thorough academic training under Jacques Dalcroze but learned from a study

of Debussy, Strauss, and Mussorgsky, to transcend the limits of such formation in order to achieve a personal style that incorporated the contemporary developments. His style gained authenticity when he turned to what was most essential to him—the peculiar melodies and the harmonies associated with Jewish music, and Bloch’s ardent life-long interest in “the Jewish soul, the complex, glowing, agitated soul that I feel vibrating throughout the Bible.” His most famous works are representative: *Schelomo (Solomon)*, a rhapsody for cello and orchestra and *Baal Schem—Three Pictures of Chassidic Life* for violin and piano. Bloch’s music, however, appropriated other both established and novel musical elements into highly dramatic scores, often influenced by philosophical, poetic, or religious themes.

Bloch was a masterful composer for strings, though he claimed that he was first a pianist and that the piano was his primary access to music. His works have been described as deeply emotional, distinguished achievements in the neo-classic and neo-romantic idiom of the early 20th century.

Nocturnes are music for the night and first appeared when John Field, an Irish pianist, composed works for the piano, a genre which Chopin adopted and whose nocturnes are among his most characteristic works.

Bloch’s *Nocturnes* suggest different aspects of the night: *Andante*, a quiet night full of stars and perhaps gentle breezes; *Andante quieto*, a lullaby; *Tempestoso*, a night storm that passes bringing a calm; *Maestoso*, a conflict followed by a midnight chase, *con moto*.

Martin—Piano Trio

Martin was a Swiss composer of whom Ernest Ansermet, the Swiss conductor and champion

of new music throughout his career, commented: "Frank Martin had the courage to tackle face on the problem...of musical language possible in our time in all its generality and transcendence. That is why, once achieved, his feat is of universal consequence."

Many factors, influences, and quests led Martin to this achievement. He was born in Geneva, Switzerland, the youngest of ten children in a Presbyterian clergyman's family. Without formal training, he began his composing but it was a performance of Bach's St. Matthew's Passion, heard at the age of twelve, which made such an impression on the young Martin that J. S. Bach remained his true master throughout his career.

While studying mathematics and physics at the University of Geneva to please his parents, he began piano and composition with Lauber. He pursued his search for a personal musical language in Zurich, Rome, and Paris.

It was in the midst of important activities such as directing the "Technique Moderne," teaching improvisation and rhythm at the Institute Jacque-Dalcroze, and acting as president of the Swiss Association of Music, that he became interested in the 12-tone technique of Arnold Schonberg in which the 12 chromatic notes are regarded as equal. Martin made a synthesis of the technique without abandoning tonality which gives a hierarchy to musical tones. Martin was fascinated by rhythm, and studied rhythms of Greece, Bulgaria, and the Far East as well as jazz, all of which are well evidenced in his instrumental work *Rhythms* (1926). *Le Vin Hebe* (1941) a work based on a retelling of the Tristan legend, and *Le Petite Symphonie Concertante* (1945) established his international reputation. In the following year, he moved to the Netherlands where he could concentrate on composition exclusively. Every year during the Salzburg Festival, his setting of *Sechs Monologe aus Jedermann*, based on the

medieval morality play *Everyman*, is performed on the steps of the cathedral. His works include dramatic operas, oratorios, song cycles, a *Concerto for Seven Wind Instruments*, an a cappella *Mass for Double Choir*, and symphonic and chamber music, all of which kept up the same level of vitality until the end of his life.

A wealthy American patron of the arts commissioned the *Trio on Irish Folk Tunes*, and requested that tunes popular at the time be used. Martin instead went to the Biblioteque National de Paris and unearthed forgotten tunes from earlier centuries. (As a result, he lost the commission.) The music, though difficult to perform, is breathtaking. The different melodies appear in all three movements, combined in ingenious fashion, transformed, shortened and extended. Changing rhythms and poly-rhythms that seem to send the instruments on different paths produce long arching phrases with a wealth of rhythmic diversity. Martin's own personal language is heard synthesized from his many influences including Bartók, Ravel, and jazz.

Dvořák–Piano Trio in f

Although less known than the "Dumky" Trio composed seven years later, the f minor trio is one of Dvořák's finest compositions. The death of his mother in 1882 greatly affected Dvořák. As with the tragic loss of three of his children, Dvořák expressed his feelings in a chamber work. Three months later (a year before his first trip to England) he composed the Trio in f minor, which possesses deep emotional moods seldom found in his orchestral writing.

It was only in mid-life that Dvořák became well known through the publication of his *Slavonic Dances*, rich with nationalistic flavor. But Dvořák also pursued the study of classical forms, while searching for his own individuality; he succeeded in

combining these forms with the native melodic and rhythmic idioms of Czechoslovakia. His four trios represent a summit of development for piano trios, begun by amateurs in the previous centuries and developed by Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, followed by Schubert and Schumann. The first performance of the trio took place on October 27, 1883, in Mlada Boleslav. Though passionate excitement is the most conspicuous tone of the work, its dark, clouded seriousness make it a complete exception among Dvořák's chamber music.

The first movement uses the classical sonata-allegro form and is almost symphonic in its breadth, suggestive of the epic style of Brahms. In the first *Allegro*, the brooding initial theme is contrasted by the expansive second; a coda brings back the original mood. The *Allegretto grazioso* is the most overtly Slavonic, based on a national dance. The piano states a wistful theme over a bouncing rhythm in triplets; later the roles are reversed. In contrast, the trio section is flowing and seamless. The third movement, *Poco adagio*, is the emotional center of the Trio with its long lines and broad scope. Though the opening cello theme brings back the mood of the first movement, the violin plays a rhapsodic, soaring melody that takes the music out of the Brahmsian texture into an atmosphere of spacious light and air. The opening mood returns but more suggestive of resigned melancholy. The finale, *Allegro con brio*, is a Rondo in which the opening theme is a *furiant*, a rapid and fiery Bohemian dance in 3/4 time with frequently shifting accents, followed by waltz music. The movement ends with a typical Dvorak trademark, a coda in the major before a final flourish.

—Notes by Dr. Catherine Roche

49th SEASON

2004-2005

*Presented in Cooperation with
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2:30 PM Sunday, October 24, 2004
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Osiris Piano Trio

2:30 PM Sunday, February 20, 2005
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