



# FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

*in Cooperation with Pacific's Conservatory of Music presents*

## ENSEMBLE SCHUMANN

THOMAS GALLANT, oboe

STEVE LARSON, viola

SALLY PINKAS, piano

2:30 PM, Sunday, April 17, 2016

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

University of the Pacific

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**HEINRICH VON HERZOGENBERG** **TRIO IN D FOR OBOE, VIOLA AND PIANO, OP. 61** (1889)  
(1843–1900) Allegretto  
Presto  
Andante con moto  
Allegro

**MAX BRUCH** **EIGHT PIECES FOR OBOE, VIOLA & PIANO, OP. 83** (1908)  
(1838–1920) I. Andante  
II. Allegro con moto  
VI. Nachtgesang: Andante con moto  
VII. Allegro vivace, ma non troppo

### INTERMISSION —

**ROBERT SCHUMANN** **THREE ROMANCES FOR OBOE AND PIANO, OP. 94** (1849)  
(1810–1856) I. Nicht schnell (*not fast*)  
II. Einfach, innig (*simple, intimate*)  
III. Nicht schnell

**MICHAEL WHITE** **INTRODUCTION AND DANCE** (2015)  
(b. 1931)

**WOLFGANG A. MOZART** **TRIO FOR OBOE, VIOLA, AND PIANO IN E-FLAT**  
(1756–1791) **MAJOR, K. 498, "KEGELSTATT"** (1786)  
Andante  
Menuetto  
Rondeaux: Allegretto

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## ARTIST PROFILE



Joined in a lively and colorful trio, the members of **ENSEMBLE SCHUMANN** – Thomas Gallant, Oboe, Steve Larson, Viola, and Sally Pinkas, Piano, present works by their name-sake Robert Schumann, as well as by Johannes Brahms, Camille Saint-Saëns, Charles Loeffler, Francis Poulenc, Dmitri Shostakovich, and others. Gallant, Larson and Pinkas have each performed at notable venues, including Lincoln Center, the Frick Collection and Carnegie Hall in New York City, Jordan Hall in Boston, Wigmore Hall in London, the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., and the festivals at Tanglewood, Ravinia, Lucerne, Spoleto and Mostly Mozart. Performing together since 2005, Ensemble Schumann has been featured at the prestigious Da Camera Series in Los Angeles, at the Clark Art Museum in Massachusetts and on Live from Fraser on WGBH Radio in Boston.

The trio's recent debut CD release, *Romantic Trios for Oboe, Viola and Piano* on the MSR Classics label, has been hailed as "...*exquisite music, exquisitely played, and exquisitely recorded...*" by *Fanfare Magazine*. *Audiophile Audition* praised their "... *stunning performances and amazingly radiant tonal qualities...*" Ensemble Schumann's next CD, an all-Mozart program (with the Adaskin String Trio) will be released in 2016.

Upcoming tours during the 2015-16 season include performances at the Mount Vernon Museum of Art and Principia College in Illinois, Cornell College in Iowa, Auburn Chamber Music Society in Alabama, Washington University Chamber Series in St. Louis, Young Auditorium in Whitewater, Wisconsin, and at Strathmore Hall in Maryland.

Invigorating performances of little known music that delight on many levels are your treat today. Though these works span a 230-year time period, they sound like close cousins due to their similar instrumentation and middle-register sound qualities. Listen for readings of remarkable warmth, ardent passion, and wonderfully glowing tonal qualities.

### Herzogenberg: Trio in D Major

A member of the Austrian nobility, Heinrich von Herzogenberg studied law and philosophy at the University of Vienna, then took up music and worked in the cities of both Graz and Leipzig as a conductor and composer, after which he joined the faculty of the Berlin Hochschule für Musik in 1885. His works include piano and organ pieces, symphonies, string quartets and a wide variety of other chamber pieces. But most of all there is an enormous quantity of oratorios and other sacred choral works, which exhibit his love of traditional counterpoint in their proliferation of spectacular fugues and for which he was widely admired in his day.

Von Herzogenberg was a contemporary and friend of Johannes Brahms, but his Trio in D Major for oboe, horn & piano, Op.61, shows none of Brahms' influence. This trio in four short movements has a modern feel to it and is quite intimate.

The main theme to the opening *Allegretto* has a genial march quality, but the music is never allowed to become unruly. There is superb, sparkly back-and-forth between the piano and the oboe while the manner in which the viola enters is both innovative and delightful.

Then comes an exceptional *Presto*. After a short piano introduction, the viola and oboe present a lively hunt theme. In this movement, von Herzogenberg reveals how well he knows the ways the instruments may combine. The short trio section is quiet and somewhat slower, retaining just a hint of the hunting rhythm that allows for a very smooth transition to the scherzo. The writing in this presto for the oboe and the viola is masterful and shows them off to their best advantage.

The following *Andante con moto* does not lend itself to motion. It is a slow and stately processional led by the viola, which toward the end is given a lovely long solo passage.

You might expect the word "brio" in the title to the finale *Allegro*, and it belongs there. The main theme, in the piano, effervesces while the oboe and viola make meaningful rhythmic offerings. The melodies are adroit and charismatic, the upbeat coda superb.

### Bruch: from 8 Pieces, Op. 83

A brilliant child prodigy, Max Bruch began composing at the age of nine. By his early teens he had completed his first symphony, and his reputation as a precocious talent had spread across Europe. As an adult, Bruch was renowned as a conductor, teacher, and the composer of major operatic, symphonic, chamber, and choral works. At his pinnacle, many saw him as destined to be thought of as one of history's greatest composers. Alas, at his death, Bruch's repute had regressed sharply. For a long time his output had been overshadowed by his Romantic colleagues Brahms, Dvorak, and Tchaikovsky; sadly he lived to see himself become a musical anachronism. When Bruch died in late 1920, three months before his 83rd birthday, Stravinsky was already enormously famous, Schoenberg was wrapped up in dodecaphony, Bartók had completed his first two string quartets, and microtonal music was well enough established that it was being viewed as the "next big thing." Bruch did not relate to any of this for as a composer he was always a conservative in the style of Brahms. Sadly, Max Bruch is now remembered chiefly for his Scottish Fantasy, his two violin concertos, and the beautiful *Kol Nidrei* for solo cello.

The chamber music composed nearer the end of his life—three works for string groups, two quintets, and an octet completed in 1920—was not discovered until the 1990s. Unlike those works, Op. 83 (written for his son, Max Felix, a notable clarinetist) was written in 1908 when Bruch was 70. The clarinet and viola parts were also arranged for violin and cello, as the publisher felt the customary piano trio combination would appeal to a wider audience. Today we hear it with oboe replacing the clarinet, further attesting to its instrumental versatility. The arpeggios in the piano parts in pieces five and six suggest his original intention might have been to include a harp, but if so, original harp parts are not extant. Abundant in rich, folk-like melodies and harmonic textures, these pieces are a pleasure to hear in any of their diverse combinations.

The presentation today of only four of the eight pieces complies with the composer's wish, who specified that he did not intend the work to be heard in its entirety at a single performance. Here we have in order of performance Nos. 1, 2, 6 and 7. Each is a two- or three-part form with the thematic content adeptly joined together, portioned, or swapped between the oboe and violin, with the piano providing harmonic backing. This trio highlights

Bruch's extraordinary melodic and dramatic gifts. Though not explicitly programmatic, the piece still tells a story.

Bruch's gift for lyricism is obvious and pleasing in all of the eight pieces, causing us to wish he had spent more time composing chamber music.

### Schumann: Three Romances

If you feel flabbergasted by the 118 different diagnoses recently accorded for Mozart's ultimate illness<sup>1</sup>, consider Robert Schumann, whose medical history has provoked even more passionate debate. Although Schumann has received fewer diagnoses than Mozart, his case is less tidy and the stakes are higher. In Schumann's case, the diagnoses have included mental illnesses. Because links between mental state and creativity are certain, stigmas attached to psychiatric illnesses have influenced analysis of Schumann's music.

The incapacitating mental illness that ultimately put Schumann into the asylum where he died was originally ascribed to tertiary syphilis. During the last two decades, Schumann has been included in concerts highlighting music by "bipolar" composers. Prominent ensembles have presented this concept to large audiences; the Baltimore Symphony performed a program entitled "Schumann's Beautiful Mind" in 2010, exploring that mind "beset by bipolar disorder yet still able to produce some of classical music's most original and inspired work." Since the 1980s, academics, by contrast, have defended Schumann's late works against those who find traces of pathology in them.

Concerts promising a "bipolar" experience and studies that find "health" in his scores not only amend the artist's biography, they also affect habits of listening. Retrospective psychiatric diagnoses shape the way people listen and what they hear. Let us not succumb to that today.

Shortly before the Schumanns moved from Dresden to Dusseldorf, he penned Three Romances, Op. 94 for oboe and piano with stated permission for alternate versions using clarinet or violin. All three of these miniatures are composed in A-B-A song form, and the work's melodies may seem similar.

<sup>1</sup> William J. Dawson, MD: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart--Controversies Regarding His Illnesses and Death: A Bibliographic Review. *Medical Problems of Performing Artists*, Vol 25 No 2 (Jun 2010)

The Romances were written in 1849, one of the most fecund years of Schumann's entire career. Previously that year, Schumann had written two additional works for winds and piano: the Adagio and Allegro, Op. 70, for horn and piano, and the Fantasy Pieces for Clarinet and Piano, Op. 73. According to Schumann himself, these pieces were written December 7, 11, and 12 in Dresden. Unlike many other oboe works at the time, they were not a result of commission by a prominent soloist; this is Schumann's only composition for oboe.

Though these beguiling pieces do not require a high degree of virtuosity they do demand expert breath-control in order to draw out extended communicative melodies and express Schumann's sense for tone color. Yet while these works are not, for the most part, virtuosic they do validate that artistically effective works need not be unduly intricate.

The first romance consists of a subdued piano introductory phrase followed by the sweet yet sad main theme played by the oboe. The piano spins a layered, supportive, and accompanying web around the oboe's searching lyricism. After a somewhat faster-paced central section, the movement ends quietly after returning to the main theme.

The second Romance begins gracefully with both instruments singing together in true duet fashion. The B section changes tempo twice beginning energetically but allowing for a calm variant before reprising the serene and gently rocking music of the A section repeat.

Echoing the opening, the two instruments begin with a slow unison statement before the speed and drive suddenly increase, only to then acquiesce to calmer expression. More than in the preceding pieces, the music quickly cycles between Schumann's recurrent contrasting but still deeply connected (yin-yang) esthetic principles. This is the most strong-featured and colorful-sounding of the eight romances and the liveliest of the set of eight.

## **White: Introduction & Dance**

Born in Chicago, Michael White attended the Chicago Music College and the Juilliard School. He began composing operas while he was composer-in-residence for the Seattle and Amarillo public schools. Subsequently, he taught at Oberlin and the Philadelphia Musical Academy. His passionate love of music has been enriching the lives of students and other music lovers at The Juilliard School in NYC since 1979 and at the Wintergreen Festival in Virginia since 2007.

The composer states: "This work, written for Ensemble Schumann in 2015, concentrates on the differences rather than the similarities between the three instruments. The emphasis is on the very contrasting colors produced by a wind instrument, a string instrument, and a keyboard. The "Introduction" is a slow, lyrical duet for the oboe and the viola, and is followed immediately by the fast, rhythmically exciting "Dance". This new section uses constantly shifting meters, jazz inflections, and imitative counterpoint between all three instruments. In the final minute of the work, the oboe and viola drop out, leaving the piano to finish alone -- literally fading into nothingness."

## **Mozart: Trio in E-flat, K. 498**

In 1786, faced with declining performance prospects, Mozart turned to writing chamber music, which was enjoying colossal popularity in Vienna. During the second half of that year, he composed profusely in a variety of chamber music genres. Among these works was the Trio in E-flat Major, K. 498 for clarinet, viola, and piano, dated 5 August 1786.

The nickname "Kegelstatt" means "bowling alley," which reflects the legend that this most enchanting of Mozart's many chamber works was written impromptu while its composer was involved in a game of nine-pins. The nickname should be applied to the horn duets, K.487, where he wrote on the manuscript "untern Kegelscheiben" ("while playing skittles")

But nevertheless there is an indisputably "recreational" quality to the E-flat trio — it sounds, more than almost any of Mozart's works, as if it were written for good friends to get together and delight in playing it. And so it was: Mozart dedicated it to Franziska von Jacquin, who was one of his pupils, the sister of his close friend Gottfried, and the daughter of flutist Nikolaus Joseph von Jacquin. Mozart was a frequent guest at the Jacquin residence, which was the site of weekly assemblies of family and friends pursuing distraction in "discussions, games, and music-making." The first performance of the new Trio took place at one of their Wednesday house concerts, with Franziska playing the piano, Mozart the viola, and on clarinet Anton Stadler, for whom Mozart wrote his Clarinet Quintet, K. 581 and Clarinet Concerto, K. 622.

The Trio is a particularly warm and amiable work—and also quite unconventional. The special character of the trio begins with the key signature, frequently used by Mozart to evoke an air of contentment, warmth and rapport (as in the horn concerti, the E-flat major piano

quartet, or the duet between Pamina and Papageno from the Magic Flute).

Warmth is also a quality Mozart valued in the timbres of both the viola and the clarinet. Both are middle-register instruments and the trio seems rather content to stay serenely in that middle register. There is no slow movement, and no real fast movement either: everything is in a friendly, moderate tempo.

The appealing poise of this work creates a bewitching shell that can obscure its profundity. No composer was ever better at turning out outwardly dissimilar melodies and having them all end up, in retrospect, to be linked and in perfect formal balance.

The sequence of movements is also somewhat uncommon: an Andante, a Menuetto, and a Rondeaux: Allegretto.

The unusual opening in sonata form, favors the oboe and piano in the presentation and development of the two main themes, although the viola does play the second theme in the recapitulation. The 6/8 *Andante* is warm, peaceful, and succinct, with no repeats; the principal theme utilizes a *grupetto* (turn) throughout.

A hearty *Menuetto* follows, here too breaking with a tradition that usually valued grace and elegance over weightier emotion. It begins cheerfully enough, yet soon has the composer using daring and unexpected dynamic contrasts that seem to presage the forcefulness of Beethoven. The central section is another oddity. Introduced briefly by a legato phrase from the oboe, the viola counters with a shaking series of passionate triplets that creates a sense of struggle among the instruments while the piano generally provides a steady rhythmic foundation.

The finale, in 2/2 time, is a seven-part Rondo, ABACADA, where theme A is a singing melody that is a variation on the main theme from the first movement. An excursion into minor key led by the dark-toned viola offers a strong counterbalance to the predominately good spirits of this entrancing movement. Then the viola becomes more energetic with restless triplet accompaniment figuration. The main theme of the trio returns and the finale reveals both virtuosic writing for all three instruments and equitable sharing of thematic material. It ends with boundless panache in an operatic-like coda.

—notes © Dr. Michael Spencer

# 60<sup>TH</sup> SEASON 2015-2016

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## Akropolis Reed Quintet

2:30 PM Sunday, September 27, 2015

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

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2:30 PM Sunday, October 25, 2015

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2:30 PM Sunday, November 15, 2015

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2:30 PM Sunday, February 14, 2016

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## Ensemble Schumann

2:30 PM Sunday, April 17, 2016

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- The use of cameras and recording devices of any kind is forbidden.
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