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Gryphon Trio

ANNALEE PATIPATANAKOON, violin

ROMAN BORYS, cello

JAMES PARKER, piano

2:30 PM, Sunday, November 12, 2017

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

University of the Pacific

JOSEPH HAYDN **TRIO IN A MAJOR, NO. 32, XV:18** (1793)

(1732–1809) Allegro moderato

Andante—

Allegro

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG **VERKLÄRTE NACHT, OP. 4** (1899, r1932)

(1874–1951)

— INTERMISSION —

JOHANNES BRAHMS **PIANO TRIO NO. 1 IN B MAJOR, OP. 8** (1854, r1889)

(1833–1897) Allegro con brio—Tranquillo—In tempo ma sempre sostenuto

Scherzo: Allegro molto—Meno allegro—Tempo primo

Adagio

Finale: Allegro

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Gryphontrio.com

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ARTIST PROFILE



Now in its 23rd year, the Gryphon Trio has impressed international audiences and the press with its highly refined, dynamic performances and has firmly established itself as one of the world's preeminent piano trios. With a repertoire that ranges from traditional to the contemporary and from European classicism to modern-day multimedia, the Gryphons are committed to redefining chamber music for the twenty-first century.

The Trio tours regularly throughout North America and Europe and their 17 recordings are an encyclopedia of works for the genre. They have commissioned over 75 new works, and regularly collaborate on projects that push the boundaries of chamber music. Honors include two Juno Awards for Classical Album of the Year, and the prestigious 2013 Walter Carsen Prize for Excellence in the Performing Arts from the Canada Council.

Deeply committed to the education of the next generation of audiences and performers alike, the Gryphons frequently conduct masterclasses and workshops at universities and conservatories, and are Artists-in-Residence at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music and Trinity College.

Roman Borys is Artistic Director of Ottawa's Chamberfest. Annalee Patipatanakoon and Jamie Parker serve as the festival's Artistic Advisors in addition to responsibilities at the University of Toronto Faculty of Music, where Mr. Parker is Rupert E. Edwards Chair in Piano Performance and Ms. Patipatanakoon is Associate Professor of Violin.

Haydn: *Trio in A Major*

Born in 1732 in the village of Rohrau, near the modern border between Austria and Slovakia, Franz Josef Haydn, the son of a very musical wheelwright and a mother who cooked for nobility, began his musical life when he went to live with his father's relative, Johann Mathias Franck at the age of five or six, where there were much better opportunities to develop his obvious musical talents. He would be grateful to Franck as reported by an early biographer as saying "thankful even in the grave, that he taught me so much, though in the process I received more beatings than food."

At eight he was recruited as a choirboy in Vienna: but when his voice changed at 18, he was suddenly out on the street. Life was very difficult at first, but he worked hard, met a lot of valuable people, and rose in the musical sphere through performance and composition.

In 1761 Haydn became Vice-Kapellmeister for the Esterházy family, the richest among Hungarian nobles, and was promoted to Kapellmeister in 1766. Upon Paul Anton's death in 1772 his brother Nicolaus succeeded him and though not a music lover, kept Haydn on at full salary.

When Prince Nicolaus died in 1790 Haydn visited London at the invitation of the violinist-impresario Salomon where he already delighted in a significant reputation. Part of the invitation included an offer to write several large pieces as well as chamber music including four groups of trios.

Haydn's early keyboard music was written for harpsichord, but by the late 1790s he was writing music with dynamic markings that could be achieved only on the piano. Haydn's keyboard trios are usually accompanied by violin and cello.

The earliest trio work dates from 1784 and the last from 1797. His earlier trios, probably for the rising number of amateur musicians, were usually in only two movements and of no great difficulty. The London trios, conversely, are much more advanced composition; they are in three movements and show greater originality and instrumental balance than the earlier trios.

This piece is a good example of Haydn's late trios. The *Allegro moderato* opens with three forceful cadential introductory chords,¹ then instantly settles into the flowing cantabile mood that marks the entire movement. The music remains fairly gentle throughout this movement, and the harmonic freedom of Haydn's writing is particularly remarkable, especially in the highly contrapuntal development, where the music flows smoothly among startling keys.

The middle movement is a simple ternary *Andante* in ABA form that moves along steadily in its 6/8 meter. After the genial opening movement, the A-minor tonality here sounds subdued; listen for the interesting pizzicato chords. The lyric central episode, however, returns to A major. Without pause, Haydn proceeds directly into the joyous concluding *Allegro* finale. Listen for the frequent syncopations, a polonaise-like rhythm, and chirping grace notes that promote the lively spirits of this movement that gambols enthusiastically to the cheerful close.

Haydn was in London for a second time in 1794 and 1795, after which he returned to part-time duty with the Esterházy family, now chiefly at the family residence in Eisenstädt just 30 miles from Vienna, where he had started his career. Much of each year, was spent in Vienna, where he finished his final years, dying as the city fell yet again into the power of Napoleon's army.

Schoenberg: *Verklärte Nacht*

Verklärte Nacht was composed when there was fierce rivalry amid the Wagner/Liszt camp and the supporters of Brahms. This was also the zenith of Richard Strauss' orchestral symphonic poems. Schoenberg unites Wagner's chromaticism, Strauss' programmatic element and Brahms' technique of "developing variation" to produce the first chamber music tone poem.

If you are expecting to hear a horribly atonal dissonant modernist twelve-tone iconoclastic piece from one of the major founders of the Second Viennese School designed to do away with Romanticism using tonally chromatic expressionism, modulation, dissonance and unorthodox harmonies you are in for an immense disappointment.

The notion that Schoenberg's early music is much more accessible than his later work is actually ironic. Violent hostility accompanied the 1902 premier of *Verklärte Nacht* in Vienna: it was attended by hissing, fist fights and riots, with one critic comparing the string sextet to "the sort of six-legged calf one might see in a side-show!"

The piece, written in just three weeks in 1899, illustrates a desolate poem from *Weib und Welt* ("Woman and World") by Richard Dehmel. Part of the concert controversy was due to use of Dehmel's poem as muse, showing concern about the situation of the woman in the story. Part was due to the highly advanced harmonic idiom that contained a single point of controversy that delayed the premier three years: use of a solitary non-existent² inverted 9th chord, to which Schoenberg retorted "thus it cannot be performed since one cannot perform that which does not exist."

¹ Pay attention!

² Uncategorized and therefore "forbidden" by the Vienna Music Society

The poem is in five sections and while the music follows this format, there is no formal break in performance. In the first section two lovers walk in desolate moonlight. In the second the woman confesses she is pregnant but the child is not his. She gazes despondently at the moon in the third. The man responds in the fourth, forgiving her and saying the child will transfigure and become his own. In the final section their breath kisses in the frozen air and they continue to walk together in the now no longer desolate moonlit night.

The music echoes the transcendent transfiguration inferred by the poem, beginning lugubriously and becoming in turn agitated, compassionate and ecstatic. Less than a year before his death, Schoenberg wrote his own note citing musical phrases and motifs that represent specific parts of the lovers' conversation and indicating that the work's two larger divisions break down into smaller ones matching the five sections of the poem. At the same time, he stated provocatively that the piece "is limited to depicting Nature and expressing human feelings."

The final part of the piece is a glowing protracted coda in which the various themes are (again in Schoenberg's words) "modified anew, so as to glorify the miracles of Nature that have transfigured this night of tragedy."

This music is highly articulate, opulent and intricate, full of shade and understated delivery, a diversity of sound impressions, recurrent key and time modifications, and involved musical direction notation. It should remind you of both Brahms and Wagner as it becomes a merger of these two traditionally divergent musical factions. The original string sextet is model chamber music that has been successfully transcribed: Schoenberg transcribed it for string orchestra in 1917, and in 1932 Eduard Steuermann, a student and colleague of Schoenberg, transcribed it for piano trio, the version we hear today.

Brahms: *Piano Trio in B Major*

In April 1853, the nearly twenty-one-year-old Johannes Brahms left his native Hamburg for a concert tour of Germany. The following month in Hanover he met the violinist Joseph Joachim, who gave him several letters of introduction including one to the Robert and Clara Schumann. On the last day of September 1853, Brahms met the Schumanns for the first time and was received as though "sent straight from God." The instant and generous friendship led to Robert Schumann's fulsome prophecies for Germany's new rising star (he called him a soaring eagle).

Working in 1854 under this "execration", he decided to publish his first chamber composition. Brahms, the brutal self-critic, had already sent several chamber works up in smoke and may have thought to do so with this piece as he returned to it 35 years later.

This piece is unique among Brahms' creations as it is a product of his earliest and latest years. It was Brahms himself who expressed the opinion that it is "rare for a work which has once reached its conclusion to become better by revision." We are fortunate that he felt obliged to revise rather than remove, leaving us with this single analytical opportunity to compare his young and old compositional styles in the context of a single work. Whatever his intent in later years, the significant revisions in the final version preserve the hand, the intellect and the somber passion churning in heart of both the energetic and inexperienced young man and the old man who had his four symphonies and all but four of his chamber compositions behind him.

The first movement, *Allegro con brio*, opens with one of Brahms' expansive and resonant melodies. It starts in the piano alone, but is joined after only four measures by the cello which conducts the melody to its close. The second subject is declared by the piano. It is in an uncanny evocative style characteristic of his later period. Drinker writes, "If you

like it, you like Brahms; if you do not, you may someday." The second subject is his sole replacement for several minor themes discarded throughout the original.

The *Scherzo* is created by alternating a sharp and vigorous melody, announced at the onset by the cello, and a lovely trio melody that should remind you of folk-music".

The third movement, an *Adagio*, launches with a broad and modest choral-like subject for the piano alone followed by the violin and cello unaccompanied. A second subject is assigned to the cello, and shortly thereafter repeated by the violin.

The finale, an *Allegro*, kicks off with a hearty cello phrase which is the basic wherewithal of the movement unusually ending a work begun in major with a movement in minor tonal. Lesser thematic matter promotes the deeply spirited character of the movement. Brahms dealt drastically with the finale in his revision. It is pretty much an original movement, imbued with the expressive energy and the efficiency of musical processes so characteristic of the mature Brahms.

An accomplished composer and pianist at age 20 and encouraged and supported by Robert and Clara Schumann, Brahms created his earliest chamber work only to rework the piece over three and one-half decades later, shortening it by one-third and (as he said) "making it less untidy" and "not as dreary as before." Part of inspired revising is knowing what to leave alone. He accordingly transformed all but the scherzo such that this piece may even be regarded as a distinct fourth piano trio (he did keep the original opus number). The 1889 version remains a mainstay of the trio repertoire and is the version on today's program.

— notes © Michael Spencer

62ND SEASON

2017-2018

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