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Gryphon Trio

ANNALEE PATIPATANAKOON, piano
ROMAN BORYS, violin
JAMIE PARKER, cello

2:30 pm, Sunday, April 10, 2022
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
University of the Pacific

DMITRY SHOSTAKOVICH PIANO TRIO NO. 2 IN E MINOR, OP. 67 (c1944)
(1906-1975) Andante—Moderato—Poco più mosso
Allegro con brio
Largo—
Allegretto—Adagio

DINUK WIJERANTE LOVE TRIANGLE (2013)
(b. 1978) (*Commissioned by the Gryphon Trio*)

— INTERMISSION —

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN PIANO TRIO NO. 7 IN Bb, "ARCHDUKE" OP. 97 (c1810-11)
(1770-1827) Allegro moderato
Scherzo: Allegro—Coda
Andante cantabile ma però con moto—Poco più adagio—
Allegro moderato—Presto

MKI Artists, One Lawson Lane, Suite 320, Burlington, VT 05401
Please contact Elizabeth Kilpatrick at (802) 658-2592 ■ elizabeth@melkap.com

gryphontrio.com/

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ARTIST PROFILE



Celebrating its 29th anniversary, the endlessly inventive 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 the traditional to the contemporary and from European classicism to modern-day multimedia, the Gryphons are committed to redefining chamber music for the 21st century.

The ensemble-in-residence at Music Toronto for nine years, the Gryphon Trio tours extensively throughout North America and Europe. Recent performances include those for the Chamber Music Society of Detroit, Northwestern, the Eastman School of Music, Tippet Rise, and Williams College. The Trio – strongly dedicated to pushing the boundaries of chamber music – has commissioned and premiered over seventy new works from established and emerging composers around the world, and has collaborated on special projects with clarinetist James Campbell, actor Colin Fox, choreographer David Earle, and a host of jazz luminaries at Lula Lounge, Toronto's leading venue for jazz and world music. Their most ambitious undertaking to date is a groundbreaking multimedia production of composer Christos Hatzis's epic work *Constantinople*, scored for mezzo-soprano, Middle-Eastern singer, violin, cello, piano, and electronic audiovisual media, which they have brought to audiences across North America and at the Royal Opera House in London.

Deeply committed to the education of the next generations of audiences and performers alike, the Gryphon Trio takes time out of their busy touring schedule to conduct master classes and workshops at universities and conservatories across North America. They are Artists-in-Residence at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music.

Shostakovich: *Piano Trio No. 2*

Notwithstanding his prodigious cycle of 15 string quartets, Shostakovich wrote sparsely for other chamber ensembles: a cello sonata, a piano sonata, and two piano trios. He composed Piano Trio No. 2 (his first was a student work) during the summer of 1944, but the touching story behind the piece became apparent only after his death. At the time of the trio's composition, Shostakovich formally dedicated it to the memory of Ivan Sollertinsky, a colleague, advisor, and collaborator, who had died earlier in the year. He introduced Shostakovich to the music of Mahler, Schoenberg, and Berg, having had a great influence on Shostakovich's career. In 1928, however, when Stalin's First Five-Year Plan condemned "decadent" Western influences in the arts, Sollertinsky fell out of favor, and he was compelled to make a public recantation. Shostakovich's career was likewise affected by the political regime under Stalin. Although Shostakovich later was "rehabilitated," he remained loyal to Sollertinsky, writing this trio in his memory.

No published program exists for the work, but the trio was immediately regarded in the Soviet Union as the composer's protest against Soviet totalitarianism. Its performance was banned after one performance until shortly after Stalin's death in 1953. In the 1970s, a rumor circulated in the Soviet Union that Shostakovich had had a second agenda in writing the trio.

The themes of the fourth movement have a strong Jewish character, inspired by stories from the Nazi death camps. Likewise, his Thirteenth Symphony, *Babi Yar*, was based on Yevtushenko's poem about another Nazi atrocity against the Jews. The Jewish inspiration for the trio was supported further by the 1979 U.S. publication of *Testimony*, Shostakovich's memoirs. In the book, Shostakovich strongly condemned anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union and expressed his own affinity for Jewish music. He said:

"I think, if we speak of musical impressions, that Jewish folk music has made a most powerful impression on me. I never tire of delighting in it; it's multifaceted; it can appear to be happy, while it is tragic. It's almost always laughter through tears. This quality of Jewish music is close to my ideas of what music should be. There should always be two layers in music. Jews were tormented for so long that they learned to hide their despair. They expressed despair in dance music. All folk music is lovely, but I can say that Jewish folk music is unique."

The trio is remarkable for the unusual tone colors that Shostakovich draws from the conventional combination of piano, violin, and cello. In contrast with the weighty keyboard resonances distinctive of 19th century trios, Shostakovich's piano writing is scant and clear. Each hand is mostly limited to a single line, with one hand doubling the other at one, two, three, or four octaves.

Extreme ranges are proxies for extreme emotional states as exemplified by the *fugato* introduction of the trio. The very dissonant first movement starts slowly, implying a mournful Russian folk song, expressed by the muted cello in high harmonics on the highest string. The violin echoes the tune in canon, playing in its lowest register at the interval of a 13th below the cello. The piano enters again down a 13th, in deep bass octaves. Ultimately, there is an increase in speed, dynamic range and anxiety, and the balance of the movement is in sonata form with two themes that are variants of the opening canon, demanding incredible technical prowess from all three instruments.

The second movement is an ironic scherzo with a simplistic main theme built nearly solely on the tones of a major triad. The two string instruments paint the trio with a bagpipe-like drone. It is a feverish dance that never finds rest.

The third movement is a funereal passacaglia, an old Baroque dance form.

The piano intones eight measures of somber chords, one chord to a measure. This chorale-like sequence is a 6-fold repetition, while the violin and cello play variations above it, sometimes separately, then together, or in canon. Listen for the piano's chorale chords to alternate between consonant harmony and sudden dissonance. It fades into the final movement without break.

The final movement is a ghoulish march with an unrelenting, mesmerizing rhythm. Three themes, introduced in turn by the violin, piano, and cello, seem to be inspired by the klezmer dances of eastern European Jews. However, as Shostakovich says in his memoirs, they are "dances of death and despair." Toward the end, there are echoes of the opening in the first movement and of the chorale-like passacaglia. The march returns, and the trio ends on an almost inaudible note of resignation.

Wijeratne: *Love Triangle*

Dinuk Wijeratne was born in Sri Lanka, grew up in Dubai, and studied composition around the world, including London at the Royal Northern College of Music (U.K.) and subsequently in New York at the Juilliard studio of Oscar-winning composer John Corigliano. He now makes his home in Canada and is completing his doctoral studies in Toronto with Christos Hatzis. He's also a conductor and pianist, and has performed with the extremely diverse group, The Silk Road Ensemble.

His boundary-crossing work sees him equally at home in collaborations with symphony orchestras and string quartets, tabla players and DJs, and takes him to international venues as poles apart as the Berlin Philharmonic and the North Sea Jazz Festival.

Wijeratne has a remarkable facility and flexibility to expertly articulate a mix of sounds and a mix of worlds. In his 2013 'Love Triangle' he brings

multi-cultural flavors together. There's an underlying rhythmic pattern inspired by Indian Classical music combined with Middle-Eastern inspired melodies. The members of the Trio also each get a chance to improvise before the entire work reaches an energetic conclusion.

Composer's notes: *"This single-movement piece entitled Love Triangle is not autobiographical, nor is it similar to the many concept-driven pieces I write. The music evolved rather rhapsodically from two distinctive features: the Middle Eastern-inspired melody heard in the strings at the outset, and the underlying rhythmic pattern inspired by a seven-beat Indian Classical 'time cycle'. It also attempts to integrate a Western Classical sense of structure with three very improvisatory cadenzas from each instrument – the musicians and I are aiming for an effect akin to that glorious 'out-of-time'-ness that occurs when an Arabic Oud solos over the unyielding fixed groove of the band. There are several other melodic and rhythmic devices that are Middle Eastern and North Indian. The Gryphon Trio, with their staggeringly diverse resumé of collaborations, are no strangers to music that is about the meeting of cultures, or about blurred boundaries between what sounds improvised and what does not. I was utterly thrilled to have this opportunity to write for them!"*

Don't be deceived by how it begins.

Beethoven: Piano Trio No. 7

As with nearly every musical form he set out, Beethoven profoundly altered the piano trio through a succession of advancing works crowning in a great expression of immense proportion and expressive strength. He completed his seventh and final multi-movement piano trio in 1811 at the age of forty-one, the Op. 97 Trio in B-flat major, known as the "Archduke" after Beethoven's dedication of the work to Archduke Rudolph (one of 12 such dedications), the emperor's

brother, and Beethoven's regular piano (and only composition) student. However, this "Archduke" sobriquet embraces more than just its dedicatee: the music is magnificent and gallant, distinctive and benevolent, the composition itself an expression of great nobility among piano trios.

The "Archduke" is characterized by what Melvin Berger calls a new "Gemütlichkeit"—German equivalent of Danish "hygge"¹—in Beethoven's compositions, a "warm, emotional style with broadly sung, moderately paced melodies and appealing dance rhythms." There are no impressive fugues, no jolting pauses, no ghostly digressions, and certainly no unrelenting disassembly of the music into its very fundamentals. Instead, there is abundant loveliness, pleasant vigor, and a sense of humor.

The composer himself was the pianist at the premiere, a Viennese charity concert. Some observers at the premiere commented on a lack of clarity and precision in his technique, yet roundly praised the composition itself. The composer's friends later described his increasing deafness making it virtually impossible for him to play. The event was one that led him to discontinue public performances.

Op. 97 is structured in four rather than the three movements as was typical for chamber works of the time. Its first movement is a sturdy sonata form which instantly sets the tone with its flowing and sentimental first theme, marked *dolce* (sweet) and then *cantabile* (singing). The piano is frequently the most noticeable of the players: melodies often begin there before moving to the strings for elaboration. The second theme is a disconnected, descending cascade scale of notes—but its character is equally welcoming and cheery. Quiet inventions like this proliferate, including the thematic use of piano trills and extended string pizzicato.

What follows is not a slow movement but a scherzo, the first such inner-movement reordering in a trio. Jovial and melodic, the scherzo maintains the work's relaxed tone by lessening the usual play on accent and rhythm so typical of the genre. Yet, in creeps a dark side: a slinking, chromatic fugato permeates the movement with a foreshadowing.

The ensuing Andante and finale, played without break, merge into a vastness, emphasizing the work's spaciousness. The slow movement's tranquil, chorale-like theme is the foundation for four variations. The progressively swift rhythmic force of each variation climaxes in the fourth, where shift of accent blends with a complex string texture and intricate piano figures. The intricate texture untangles in the theme's restatement, now tinted with sadness, and the movement drowsily wafts off ... only to be abruptly aroused by the rowdy romp that follows—Beethoven's favorite: an unpretentious rondo finale.

Beethoven composed the "Archduke" trio at the end of the decade during which he achieved full compositional maturity. In this remarkably productive "heroic" middle period, he penned a multitude of masterpieces, including the opera *Fidelio*; Symphonies 3, 4, 5, and 6; Piano Concertos 3, 4, and 5; and romances, overtures and incidental music. Initiating his published catalog with a set of trios in 1795 and culminating with the "Archduke" some sixteen years later, Beethoven would leave the piano trio behind during his final "late" period. Two years after Haydn's death, Beethoven's financial security was assured and his fame spreading internationally. The "Archduke" is thus the marvelous end of an era.

— notes © Dr. Michael Spencer

¹ See: <https://www.ageing.ox.ac.uk/blog/2017-Happiness-Germany-Denmark>

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