



AMELIA PIANO TRIO

Anthea Kreston, violin, viola

Jason Duckles, cello

Rieko Aizawa, piano

2:30 PM, February 14, 2010

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

In cooperation with Pacific's
Conservatory of Music

FAMOUS VOICES — HIDDEN CLASSICS

Trio in G Major, L3 (1880-81)

Andantino con moto allegro

Scherzo—Intermezzo: Moderato con allegro

Andante espressivo

Finale: Appassionato

Claude Debussy

(1862–1918)

Piano Trio (1937)

Adagio non troppo—Piu mosso—Allegro vivace

Tempo di marcia

Largo—Allegro vivo e molto ritmico

Leonard Bernstein

(1918–1990)

—intermission—

Piano Trio in G minor, B25/Op 8 (1828-29)

Allegro con fuoco

Scherzo: Con moto, ma non troppo

Adagio sostenuto

Finale: Allegretto

Frédéric Chopin

(1810–1849)

The AMELIA PIANO TRIO is represented by Melvin Kaplan, Inc.

115 College Street, Burlington, Vermont 05401

www.melkap.com

www.ameliapianotrio.com

Recordings: Cedille, Traditional Crossroads, Naxos

Artists

Formed in 1999, the **Amelia Piano Trio** became known as one of the great young chamber music groups after participating in Isaac Stern's Chamber Music Workshop at Carnegie Hall in 2000. As a result, Mr. Stern became a mentor to the Trio and presented the ensemble's Carnegie Hall debut at Weill Recital Hall. Joining the roster of Concert Artists Guild in 2001, the Trio went on to win the ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming and to record CDs with Cedille Records and Naxos.

The Trio has performed in many major halls, including the 92nd Street Y, Carnegie Hall, Ravinia in Chicago, Seattle's Meany Hall, and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. Other performances include appearances at the Caramoor Music Festival in New York, the La Jolla Chamber Music Society, NPR's *St. Paul Sunday*, Calgary Pro Musica, Bargemusic and Merkin Hall.

The Amelia members have quickly made their mark as performers and commissioners of new music. Notably, Pulitzer Prize-winning composer John Harbison wrote his first full-length piano trio for the Amelia, a recording of which was released on the Naxos label in the spring of 2007. The Trio's most recent commissioning project is a new Triple Concerto, *Orpheus and Eurydice*, composed by Daron Hagen.

In 2003 the Trio was asked by National Public Radio to be the Young Ensemble-in-Residence. This exciting week of live concerts and interviews put the Amelia firmly in the foreground of classical music in America, reaching an estimated 1.5 million listeners. The Trio has also been featured on Chicago's WFMT in live broadcast performances of the complete Beethoven Trios, and returned to *Performance Today* and *St. Paul Sunday* in 2009.

The Amelia Piano Trio is actively involved in arts education and dedicates a substantial amount of time to educational projects, master classes, and coaching children and adults. The Trio members

are professors at the Hartt School of Music and Connecticut College. In addition to developing award-winning outreach programs, the Trio is in residence at the Green Lake Chamber Music Camp, where they teach gifted high school and college-aged students the art of chamber music.

Program

Today's program provides a double treat. You will hear chamber music written by composers who did not create much in this genre and what they did produce is music not frequently performed: truly "famous voices" that have left us "hidden classics." In a second remarkable coincidence, all three composers were only 19 when they completed their works!

Debussy—Piano Trio in G

Claude Debussy is considered the founder and leading exponent of musical Impressionism, although he did not care for that label. His tonal constructions and nontraditional musical scales influenced many composers who followed him.

Born to a shopkeeper and a seamstress who hoped their son's piano virtuosity would remove them from their poverty, Debussy entered the Paris Conservatory at the age of 10 where he began to study composition eight years later.

Don't expect this trio to open in the venerable sonata-allegro form found in many works of the 19th century. The piano presents with a metric alignment that seems "wrong" during the opening phrase, but listen for the meter to be shifted back by one beat to its correct position when the violin enters four bars later. All this is followed by more energetic music marked *Allegro appassionato*. The cello introduces a tender triplet melody near the midpoint of the movement that is taken up by the violin as well. The opening material quietly reprises, but is quickly displaced by the *Allegro appassionato*. Debussy closes the movement in quiet dissolution, typical of his mature style and the opening material

returns in the original key. The rather brief *Scherzo* reflects the witticism of Schuman's influence, although the ornamentation is typical of Debussy. The cello presents the initial gentle melody of the *Andante espressivo*, and it is taken up straight away by the violin. Listen in the middle of this section for the rolling, arpeggiations; do they remind you of the composer's *Claire de lune*? The piece ends with a strong *Finale* in a harmonically restless way, where Debussy moves through at least four thematic (and tonal) areas and develops well executed motifs as he goes. Although this construction would probably have drawn much criticism in Debussy's early career, the young composer was already exploring ways of avoiding the restrictions of long-established harmonics.

Although Debussy composed this work during the summer of 1880 and finished it in 1881 while accompanying Madame Nadedjda von Meck¹ as music teacher and accompanist to her children on their world travels, this piece almost did not exist. Once thought to be an early work either lost during the century following its composition or destroyed by the composer, its reconstruction in the 1980s was a musicological coup. There was a certain amount of re-composition that was necessary, but most of the work was pieced together from an assortment of genuine documents, including several partial manuscripts and a copy of the original cello part.

In 1984, Harold Schonberg, music critic for the *New York Times*, offered his perspective in a review of the first recording of this obscure work: "The Debussy piece is juvenilia. You can have a lot of fun putting it on the turntable² and asking your learned friends who the composer is. Nothing in the music suggests Debussy. It is sentimental, sweet, and sugared..." Schonberg

¹ Tchaikovsky's celebrated sponsor

² Do you remember what a turntable is?

concluded that its musical importance demonstrates that "one of the supreme composers and innovators of musical history...did not arrive on the scene fully formed." Listen for yourself and decide if Schonberg's comments correctly mirror what you hear in today's performance.

Bernstein—Piano Trio

Leonard Bernstein was one of the most influential figures in classical music in the last half of the twentieth century. Bernstein had an impressive influence on the popular audience's acceptance and appreciation of classical music. It was through his work as conductor, writer, and educator and his own work as a composer, particularly his scores for such Broadway musicals as *West Side Story*, that he built a fresh relationship between classical and popular music.

Bernstein didn't write many chamber scores which makes this one a rarity. The youthful piece, unpublished during his lifetime, is irregular in quality but augurs significant promise for the development and acknowledgment that were to come. Leonard Bernstein's *Piano Trio* was written in 1937 at age 19 in his third year at Harvard University where he was a composition student of Walter Piston and had fallen under the influence of the eminent conductor Dmitri Mitropoulos. Mildred Spiegel, a contemporary student, remembered that this piece was inspired by a visit Bernstein paid to her in 1936 at the Emerson House in York Harbor where he heard her trio. Bernstein's Trio was premiered in 1937 at Harvard University by Ms. Spiegel and the Madison Trio.

This delightful, clever, and engaging composition, which begins with a deliberate and lyric introduction, is written in a free-tonal style. Never giving any of the three instruments a leading responsibility, Bernstein consistently balances their voices throughout the whole composition. Listen in the first movement for the six-note motif in the cello that is handed off to the violin. In the

second movement, you should be able to envisage some of Bernstein's characteristic Broadway sounds. The third movement is the least like the mature Bernstein and the least typical of his work. See if you can hear the influence established classical composers had on this early work, especially that of post-Romantic Brahms.

If you are familiar with other of Bernstein's works, listen for several melodic ideas that were recycled for use in later pieces. For example, the opening of the second movement was used later by Bernstein in his musical *On the Town*.

Chopin—Piano Trio in g

Sonatas, preludes, etudes, waltzes, polonaises, mazurkas, nocturnes, scherzi, impromptus, and ballades: this is how we usually think of the corpus of Chopin's work. He wrote little chamber music and only one piece for more than two instruments: the *Piano Trio* in g minor.

Chopin wrote his trio the year before he fled Warsaw for Paris ahead of invading Russians who trampled the Polish identity and ushered in nationalistic turmoil that lasted for years. Chopin's father was a French émigré to Warsaw, and it was a intriguingly full-circle passage that he made returning to Paris. Chopin's character was formed by the nature of his parents, Paris, and Warsaw melded together into a unique identity that he was never to lose. Robert Schumann wrote: "Chopin might publish anything without his name; one would nevertheless immediately recognize him... His music possesses such remarkable original power that it is impossible even for a moment to be uncertain as to its source."

His focus on music for the piano notwithstanding, Chopin had a fondness for cello, writing several works *for* that instrument. But his *Piano Trio* is the only instance where he wrote chamber music for the violin. Chopin also elected to write the trio in the four-movement form favored by Beethoven and Schubert in their trios, but Chopin permitted the piano to dominate

the textures of the piece and allowed it to pilot the music in ways that Beethoven and Schubert did not. The opening *Allegro con fuoco* starts off in a resolute manner, marked by all three instruments stamping out the melodic figure that will function as the first subject. The second idea is expressively smooth, and you should listen for this contrast of the dramatic and the gentle that characterizes the entire movement. The *Scherzo* is somewhat lighter and, unexpectedly, flows very smoothly (including its soothingly shaded middle section) rather than dancing aggressively. The slow movement, marked *Adagio sostenuto*, starts off very sharply outlined, but then relaxes into supple melodies, well-matched to the strings. The concluding *Allegretto* is launched by piano alone, and it is a movement in which you will hear suggestions of the mature Chopin.

Robert Schumann offered a glowing review of Chopin's *Piano Trio* when it was published in 1833, memorably proclaiming: "Is it not as noble as possible, more enthusiastic than the song of any poet, original in detail as in the whole, every note life and music?" Despite this praise, this music is not frequently performed. It is clear that the young Chopin was still looking to the past Masters as he wrote his trio and began his musical journey. Within that framework, it is remarkable to learn that once he had completed the trio, he actually considered a re-instrumentation. In the summer of 1830 he wrote to a friend: "Last Saturday I tried the trio, and, perhaps because I had not heard it for so long, was satisfied with myself. 'Happy man,' you will say, won't you? It then struck me that it would be better to use the viola instead of the violin, as the first string predominates in the violin, and in my trio, it is hardly used at all. The viola would, I think, accord better with the cello." While Chopin did not make that change, publishing the trio in its original form for violin, cello, and piano, it is in that form with the viola that we will hear it.

Notes© by Dr. Michael Spencer

FIFTY-FOURTH SEASON

2009-2010

*Presented in Cooperation with
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The Poulenc Trio

(Supported in part by a SAC Grant)

2:30 PM Sunday, October 11, 2009
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
RECEPTION FOLLOWING

Brentano String Quartet

7:30 PM Saturday, November 7, 2009
Faye Spanos Concert Hall

Amelia Piano Trio

2:30 PM Sunday, February 14, 2010
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
RECEPTION FOLLOWING

Dædalus String Quartet

2:30 PM Sunday, March 14, 2010
Morris Chapel
RECEPTION FOLLOWING

Quartet New Generation

2:30 PM Sunday, April 18, 2010
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
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- The use of cameras and recording devices of any kind is forbidden.
- There is no smoking in the lobby or auditorium.
- Please turn off cellular phones and disengage audible alarms on pagers and watches.
- Students are admitted free on a space-available basis.
- Concert programs are subject to change without notice.
- Seating is unreserved for the current Season.
- Contributions, including memorials, are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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General Admission: \$25

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Students with ID Card: Free

FOCM welcomes children to our concerts. However, an adult must accompany children ten years and under (no babes in arms please). At the request of our artists, children should not sit in the first four rows.

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