

62nd Concert Series 2015-2016



FRIENDS *of* MUSIC

is pleased to present

The Montrose Trio

Jon Kimura Parker, piano

Martin Beaver, violin

Clive Greensmith, cello

Saturday, October 24, 2015 – 8:00 pm

Sleepy Hollow High School, Sleepy Hollow, New York

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* as of October 5, 2015

Program

Trio in E-flat Major, Op. 1, No. 1

Allegro

Adagio cantabile

Scherzo: Allegro assai

Finale: Presto

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Piano Trio No. 2 “Temple Visions”

Internal Conflict

Galactic Districts

A City Mourned

Final Resolutions

James Lee III
(b. 1975)

Intermission

Trio No. 1 in B Major, Op. 8

Allegro con brio [con moto]

Scherzo: Allegro molto; Trio: meno allegro [piu lento]

Adagio [non troppo]

Finale: Allegro [molto agitato]

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Piano by Steinway

The Montrose Trio appears by exclusive arrangement with Opus 3 Artists, 470 Park Avenue South, New York, NY.

Next Concert

Saturday, November 7, 2015, 8:00 pm at Sleepy Hollow High School, Sleepy Hollow, NY

Yefim Bronfman, piano

Program: Prokofiev's Piano Sonata No. 1 in F minor, Op. 1, Piano Sonata No. 4 in C minor, Op. 29, and Piano Sonata No. 3 in A minor, Op. 28; R. Schumann's Faschingschwank aus Wien, Op. 26 and Arabeske in C Major, Op. 18; and Prokofiev's Piano Sonata No. 2 in D minor, Op. 14.

Program notes

Trio in E-flat Major, Op. 1, No. 1

Ludwig van Beethoven

When Beethoven's Opus 1 was published, he was 24 years old and had been struggling with the three Trios in the set for several years. He sketched this one, the **Trio No. 1**, probably before he left his hometown of Bonn in 1792; the second and third were probably written later in Vienna. Haydn had thought much of Beethoven's talent when they had first met in Bonn; in Vienna, Beethoven's mission was to study with Haydn and receive, in the words of Count Waldstein, "the spirit of Mozart from the hands of Haydn." Instead he received one-hour lessons in strict counterpoint, which is not what he believed he needed most nor what he wanted. He was relieved when, after a little more than a year, Haydn left for London, and the lessons stopped.

Shortly after Haydn returned, he went to dinner at the home of Prince Carl Lichnowsky, where Beethoven was living almost as a member of the family. Thus Haydn was there when Beethoven, at the piano, gave the first performance, with violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh and cellist Anton Kraft, of the three trios that were to become his Opus 1 and were then works-in-progress. Beethoven told one of his pupils that, although Haydn said many kind things about his trios, he advised him against publishing the one in C minor. Although he initially disagreed with that advice, Beethoven later said, "When I was a beginner I should have perpetrated the most flagrant follies in composition but for Papa Haydn's advice."

A huge difference in intellectual and social orientation separated Beethoven and Haydn. The two were almost 40 years apart in age. Haydn had spent almost his entire professional life as a prince's hireling, not as an independent artist. Beethoven was uncompromisingly free spirited and impatient with the idea of knowing his "place." Although he did respect his elder's professional skills, he felt the need to keep his distance. Haydn's works were models of formal perfection for Beethoven, but the passionately emotional expressive content of the younger man's work had no place in the elder's aesthetics.

One of the things this anecdotal history suggests is that today's listeners need to try to hear Beethoven's early works as Haydn heard them, as examples of advanced artistic thought that exceeded established contemporary limits. Although it's difficult for us to put ourselves in the position of listeners of the late 18th century, trying to do so helps us understand that even Beethoven's earliest music did expand the boundaries of chamber music, and looked forward to his later works rather than backward to Haydn's.

The Opus 1 Trios were, indeed, landmarks. The **Trio No. 1 in E-flat** has the clarity of Mozart, but a complete lucidity of texture that is distinctly Beethoven's own. Further, the independent cello lines, evident quite near the beginning of the first movement, resembles Mozart's technique more closely than Haydn's, since the latter did not write independent cello parts. Immediately, with this Trio, Beethoven abandoned Mozart and Haydn's three-movement form and added a Scherzo, which in a way placed the Trio formally on the scale and plane of a symphony. The protracted length of each movement also was extraordinary for the time, as were the unexpected shifts of rhythm and harmony and the leaps of melody that no other young composer had then imagined.

Yet the first movement, *Allegro*, opens with a melodic musical figure frequently used by the composers of the Mannheim court to add virtuosic brilliance to their music. The

figure was called “Mannheim rockets,” and it consisted of an upward movement of broken chords. Although the second movement, *Adagio*, is not so innovative, close listening reveals hints at rhythmic and harmonic novelties that would become more developed and characteristic of Beethoven’s later technique. In the opening of the *Scherzo: Allegro assai*, we hear a string duet, and in the trio the concentrated music is hushed. At times agitated sounding, at times lyrical, this animated movement certainly does not have the stately sound of the traditional minuet, which it replaces. It ends with a brief coda. The *Finale: Presto* begins with large intervals in the piano prior to the announcement of a concise theme in the strings. The dashing main theme of the rondo exemplifies the boldness of the young composer’s inventiveness. The brilliant coda brings back some intimations of the initial theme as it ends the movement.

— notes provided by Susan Halpern

Piano Trio No. 2 “Temple Visions”

James Lee III

Inspired by the design and history of the Hebrew temple from the Bible, **Piano Trio No. 2 “Temple Visions,”** set in four movements, is the latest installment in my several compositions that have used thematic images found in biblical books. The book of Revelations has been a particular inspiration here.

Internal Conflict is a musical commentary on the 12th chapter of Revelation that, in verses seven through nine, describes a war in heaven between Michael and his angels and the dragon and his angels. Loosely constructed in a sonata form, it opens with a very muscular ascending gesture in the violin, cello, and piano in a sort of E Phrygian mode. As theme 1 fades away, the more lyrical theme 2 begins in the F Lydian mode. The melodies are transferred among the three instruments until a dramatic development section occurs. After the various themes are worked out, there is a brief reprise of theme 1 in the recapitulation sections that seamlessly morphs into a bit of theme 2 along with very delicate gestures particularly in the piano part. The movement ends gently in a B Major tonality.

Galactic Districts serves as a scherzo movement primarily in a triple meter with occasional divergences into duple and quadruple meters. The movement’s inspiration comes from the idea of being in the third heaven when, from time to time, one decides to visit other galaxies and worlds/planets in the universe. Often employing the Lydian mode, the movement breezes by with various changes in harmonic colors that symbolize various aspects of the worlds in the universe discovered on one’s journeys.

A City Mourned is a musical commentary and lamentation directly inspired by the 17th and 18th chapters of Revelation. Those who tirelessly supported her mourned the great city of Babylon that sat on seven hills and mountains. They wept and wailed when they saw the city’s ruin. The movement opens with a lengthy solo cello passage where, as in the first movement, I have employed the use of the Phrygian mode, though slightly modified. As it continues, the violin joins in singing this lamentation. When the piano enters, the musical conversation is in full swing. The movement ends with a large contrast in the ranges, with an open 5th in the piano and strings that symbolizes the open emotional void as a result of the city’s utter desolation.

Final Resolutions hints back to the opening movement with its ascending gestures. This movement is a reaction to the previous three in which one is invited to choose with which

side of the pressing issue one wants to be associated. There is a sort of dance-like quality to this movement that gives it a continuing sense of forward motion. Delicate aspects from the second movement are brief reminders of what the musical issues are. Then the movement presses forward to its final climax and coda. — notes by James Lee III

Trio No. 1 in B Major, Opus 8

Johannes Brahms

Brahms finished writing this work early in 1854. It is an extraordinary achievement for a twenty-one-year-old composer who just was finding his way into the world of music after a deprived youth spent in the slums of Hamburg. He was in Hanover at the time, visiting his new friend, the violinist Joseph Joachim, who was only two years older than he but already concertmaster of the court orchestra there. In 1853 Joachim had introduced Brahms to Schumann, who had in turn sent the young composer to his publisher, Simrock, who issued the trio in 1854.

The Trio No. 1 is Brahms' ambitious attempt to bring together the Classical and Romantic styles. Brahms destroyed almost all of his other works from that time, but he reused some ideas from them later; we know that some of his most treasured later compositions, like the First Piano Concerto and the Piano Quintet, were derived from very different earlier works. Surprisingly, since this work received some harsh criticism from his beloved friend Clara Schumann, Brahms nevertheless allowed it to become his first published piece of chamber music.

Around 1889 Simrock found it was time for a new printing and asked Brahms if any corrections were necessary. As he took a fresh look at the thirty-five-year-old score and began by making some minor editorial revisions, in the end he had revised it extensively. He had started, he said, intending only to "do its hair," but ended by giving it "a new wig." One of his musician-friends said that the new version was like a joint composition by two masters, one young and one old.

The first version was youthful and fresh, but it was too loose and too long, the product of an exuberantly fertile imagination not yet disciplined by experience. The mature Brahms simplified his early structures, put some restraints on their rhetoric, and even replaced some of the original themes, writing a new contrasting theme for the slow movement and a new second theme for the finale. He also altered connecting passages, created entirely new development sections, and changed some of the tempi. The result was two-thirds the length of the old one, but nonetheless still a massive composition. Now the Trio joined the impetuosity and passion of youth with the confidence and architectural mastery of Brahms' maturity.

Like Brahms' other piano Trios, the work is in four movements, with a second movement scherzo added to the traditional three movements the Classical composers so often used. The huge proportions of the extensive first movement, *Allegro con brio*, spring from the heroic length of the main subjects with which the Trio makes its pensive beginning. The piano introduction is followed by a remarkable cello solo that segues to the whole instrumental trio. The second theme, introduced by the piano in octaves, is curving and introspective. This long movement has fully five themes; at the end, the music subsides into

a tranquil coda. The first movement is the one most extensively revised in this later version of the work.

Next comes the *Scherzo, Allegro molto*, a soft, skipping minor dance reminiscent of Mendelssohn. The movement has a lightness, with staccato rhythms, and a charming bucolic theme in its contrasting central section. Although Brahms changed almost nothing in this movement, he did give it a new coda. The serene slow movement, *Adagio*, is a solemn, hymn-like meditation with an extended, warm cello solo as its middle section. Its feel is dark-hued yet calm, with a rich texture. The finale, an expansive rondo, *Allegro*, has a chromatic main subject in B minor that gives it an air of restlessness and instability which is dispelled at last when the music shifts to B Major, the key in which the first movement began. In this movement the piano's power gives the work a symphonic feel.

The first public concert performance of this trio, its official world premiere, was given in New York on November 27, 1855, at Dodsworth Hall, by the pianist William Mason, violinist Theodore Thomas, and cellist Carl Bergmann. — *notes provided by Susan Halpern*

About the Artists

Formed in 2014, **The Montrose Trio** is a collaboration stemming from a long and fruitful relationship between pianist Jon Kimura Parker and the Tokyo String Quartet. Mr. Parker was the retiring quartet's final guest pianist; a backstage conversation with violinist Martin Beaver and cellist Clive Greensmith led to The Montrose Trio's creation. The ensemble quickly established a reputation for performances of the highest distinction. Its debut performance was for the Chamber Music Society of Detroit, with subsequent performances at Wolf Trap in Washington, DC, in Montreal, and at the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival. This season, in addition to appearing here in Sleepy Hollow, the group's performances will be in Philadelphia, Vancouver, Jacksonville, Detroit, and La Jolla, and will include a special appearance at the Hong Kong Chamber Music Festival.

Pianist **Jon Kimura Parker**, originally from Canada, performs with major North American orchestras on a regular basis. He also appears in Off the Score, an experimental chamber group with legendary drummer and composer Stewart Copeland. He is Artistic Advisor of the Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival in Washington State and Professor of Piano at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University in Houston.

Violinist **Martin Beaver** has appeared as soloist with the orchestras of San Francisco, Indianapolis, Montreal, Toronto, and Sapporo, among others. He has toured internationally as a soloist and chamber musician, and has collaborated with musical luminaries such as Pinchas Zukerman, Lynn Harrell, and Yefim Bronfman.

Cellist **Clive Greensmith** has performed as a soloist with the London Symphony, the Royal Philharmonic, the English Chamber Orchestra, the Mostly Mozart Orchestra, the Seoul Philharmonic, and the RAI orchestra in Rome. He has worked with distinguished musicians including András Schiff, Claude Frank, and Steven Isserlis.

Mr. Beaver and Mr. Greensmith are on the faculty of the Colburn School in Los Angeles.

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