

Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio

JOSEPH KALICHSTEIN, PIANO

JAIME LAREDO, VIOLIN

SHARON ROBINSON, CELLO

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2003

— PROGRAM —

Piano Trio in B-flat Major, K.502 W. A. MOZART (1756-1791)

Allegro

Larghetto

Allegretto

Piano Trio in A Minor MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)

Modéré

Pantoum

Passacaille

Finale

— INTERMISSION —

Piano Trio No.1 in B Major, Op.8 JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

Allegro

Scherzo: Allegro molto

Adagio

Allegro

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WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)

Piano Trio in B-Flat Major, K. 502

The *Piano Trio* in B-flat Major, K. 502 was completed in Vienna on November 18, 1786, during a particularly promising time in Mozart's career. Mozart had no shortage of commissions at this time. He had already seen the success of his opera, *The Abduction of the Seraglio*, and *The Marriage of Figaro* would be completed this same year. He was turning out one masterpiece after another in various musical forms.

It is widely assumed that Mozart composed this trio for his talented piano student, Franziska von Jacquin and her family. The trio was written in the prevailing rococo style, the *style galant*, which put emphasis on elegance, grace, and charm. Such music was characterized by simple melodies that were highly ornamented, and with accompaniments of less importance. Mozart indicated that the trio be played in "friendly, musical, social circles."

Mozart called this trio a *terzett*, which, in his day, referred to any three-voiced composition. The trios that he had composed previously he had called *divertimenti*. In the earlier works the cello was treated as a continuo instrument, reinforcing the bass line of the piano, while the violin was also somewhat subservient to the piano. In the *Trio*, K. 502 the top two voices become equal partners and the cello frequently joins them.

The opening movement is very delicate in character. In the exposition of this movement the theme is first stated in B-flat, and is then moved up five notes to F. The entire movement is built almost entirely around this sole theme. A subsidiary theme introduced at the start of the development section is a brief exception.

The *Larghetto* movement reminds one of a leisurely discussion among three friends. The piano introduces the various topics and the violin echoes them. The cello rarely speaks on its own in this movement.

During the final movement, the cello suddenly begins to take a more active role in the ensemble, often answering the violin. By the conclusion of the movement, the listener is well aware that he is indeed hearing a three-voiced composition.

Program notes by Margaret Bragg, 2003

MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)

Piano Trio in A Minor

Maurice Ravel was born in 1875 in Ciboure, Basses-Pyrenees. His father was a Swiss engineer and his mother was of Basque origin. Though Ravel began to study the piano at the age of seven, he was not a child prodigy. He entered the Paris Conservatory at the age of fourteen and remained there for sixteen years, an unusually long time for a student.

As an adult, Ravel had a distant and reserved manner. He avoided strong personal attachments and never formed a habit of adopting the esthetic, philosophical, or political creeds of others. He led a quiet life and placed everything subsidiary to his career as a composer, rarely performing, conducting, or teaching.

Although much of his music was written for the piano and many works were later orchestrated, Ravel did compose one string quartet and one trio for piano, violin, and cello. The *Quartet* was completed in 1903 while he was still a student. The *Trio* was completed in 1914 during a time when Ravel was distraught over the outbreak of World War I. "I have never worked so hard, with such insane heroic rage," Ravel wrote to a friend, in reference to the *Trio*. Considering his attitude at the time, the *Trio* seems surprisingly remote and objective, with no reference made to extra-musical events.

Ravel made obvious use of impressionistic techniques, but he was also drawn to the clean melodies, distinct rhythms, and firm structure of classicism. Whereas Debussy, his contemporary, made predominant use of musical colors and textures, Ravel's music remained somewhat closer to traditional structure and thematic development.

The first movement of Ravel's trio, *Modéré*, utilizes a rhythmic figure of 3-2-3 which is found in a popular Basque folk dance. The initial theme is introduced by the piano and undergoes several transformations in the course of the movement. A second theme, slightly slower but based on the same rhythm, later is introduced by the violin.

The second movement's title is derived from the word "*pantun*." This refers to a Malayan verse form which was occasionally used by Victor Hugo and Charles Baudelaire, and later formed the basis for a declamatory, guitar-accompanied song. The movement is in the form of a *Scherzo*.

The *Passacaille*, or *Passacaglia*, takes the form of the common Baroque technique in which a melody, usually in triple meter, is subjected to continuous variation. Here there are ten variations, the first and the last variation being played by the piano alone.

The fourth movement begins with an inversion of the initial *Modéré* theme. A second very expansive theme is stated by the piano over trills played in the strings. This final movement is technically dramatic with a wide range of virtuosic sound effects.

The *Trio* was dedicated to Ravel's former counterpoint professor at the Conservatory, André Gédalge, and was first performed on January 28, 1915.

Program notes © by Margaret Bragg, 2003

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

Trio for Piano, Violin and Cello in B Major, Op. 8 (1854)

The original version of Brahms' Op. 8 *Trio* was completed at age twenty, just as he was starting to achieve fame as a composer. Thirty-five years later, he reworked it somewhat, keeping all the major themes intact, streamlining it, and in a few crucial places, providing new, more contrasting material for second themes. "I haven't put a wig on it, but merely combed its hair," Brahms wrote to a friend. That he succeeded in blending old and new so seamlessly still astonishes those who know both versions, and says something about the unity of musical vision Brahms maintained throughout his life.

The work opens with a sinuous melody begun by the piano and joined by the cello. It creates a glow which hovers over much of the work. Particularly worth noticing is the first movement recapitulation, which enters almost unnoticed in a minor key, and simply mutates into the second part of the opening theme. Listen for the place where cello and violin play in unison and then effortlessly split apart from each other while continuing their singing lines.

The *Scherzo* is positively Mendelssohnian, and apart from the coda, is essentially as the twenty-year old wrote it. Note particularly the ominous little counter-melody heard in the A section of the *Scherzo*, which changes character entirely and reappears as the theme of the lyric middle section.

The mystical music of the third movement would be extraordinary regardless of the age of the person who created it. Coming from the pen of a twenty-year old, it is probably the most surprising portion of the work. While a dramatic cello melody brings the movement down to earth temporarily, it ends as it began, in some other world.

Although the last movement also uses material from the first version, the way it is treated is pure late Brahms. It is terse, driven by the mix of harmonic and rhythmic motion that Brahms understood so supremely well.

Adapted from Styra Avins © October 2, 2001

Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio

Since making their debut as the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio at the White House for President Carter's Inauguration in January 1977, pianist Joseph Kalichstein, violinist Jaime Laredo and cellist Sharon Robinson have set the standard for performance of the piano trio literature for twenty-seven consecutive seasons. As one of the only chamber ensembles with all its original members, the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio balances the careers of three internationally-acclaimed soloists while making annual appearances at many of the world's major concert halls, commissioning spectacular new works, and maintaining an active recording agenda.

The 2003-04 season marks the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio's first as the Kennedy Center Chamber Ensemble in Residence, to be launched with an All-Ravel program in February 2004. The Trio will perform a similar program in October 2003 in the inaugural season of Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall. The 2003-04 season will also see the release of their next two projects on Arabesque Recordings: in August 2003, the world-premiere recording of Richard Danielpour's *In the Arms of the Beloved* (a concerto for violin and cello written for Jaime Laredo and Sharon Robinson in honor of their 25th anniversary and premiered in April 2002), paired with Danielpour's piano trio *A Child's Reliquary*, written for and performed by the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio. The second release (September 2003) will be Volume 2 of their complete Beethoven survey. Memorable concerts over the years include the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio's performance on Carnegie Hall's Centennial Series; several tours of Japan, New Zealand and Australia; a Brahms series with the Guarneri Quartet featuring his entire literature for piano and strings; the Beethoven cycle on Lincoln Center's Great Performers Series – the first time the complete Beethoven piano trios were performed at Lincoln Center – and performances with orchestras across America and Europe of new works written especially for the Trio by David Ott and Pulitzer Prize winner Ellen Taaffe Zwilich.

The Trio is honored that the Chamber Music Society of Detroit has created the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson International Trio Award (KLRITA), an initiative of the Trio with a two-fold purpose: to honor the Trio's contribution to chamber music worldwide and to encourage and enhance the careers of promising young piano trios. The KLRITA, in which twenty presenters nationwide will participate, will be awarded to a new ensemble every two years.

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