

# VIENNA PIANO TRIO

WOLFGANG REDIK, VIOLIN  
MATTHIAS GREDLER, VIOLONCELLO  
STEFAN MENDEL, PIANO

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2006

## ~ PROGRAM ~

### *Piano Trio in C Major Hob.XV/27*

FRANZ JOSEF HAYDN (1732-1809)

Allegro

Andante

Presto

### *Piano Trio in A Minor*

MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)

Modéré

Pantoum: Assez vif

Passacaille: Très large

Final: Animé

## ~ INTERMISSION ~

### *Piano Trio in B-flat Major, Op. 99 (D898)*

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

Allegro moderato

Andante un poco mosso

Scherzo. Allegro

Finale. Allegro vivace

An anonymous donor generously underwrites tonight's performance.

FRANZ JOSEF HAYDN (1732-1809)

*Trio No. 43 in C Major for Piano, Violin, and Cello (1796)*

*Hob XV/27*

Haydn's piano trios are nowhere near as famous as his quartets. This is because in contrast to the quartets, which Haydn wrote for his own use or for outside commissions, the trios he wrote prior to 1790 were for the Esterhazy Court and thus distinctly limited in their possibilities. However, once Haydn retired from his long tenure at the Court, he was invited to England where new possibilities opened up to him. He now had a sophisticated audience in the largest city in the world, along with excellent keyboard players up to the technical challenge presented by his music. In contrast to his position as servant (albeit exalted) at the Esterhazy estate, in England he was his own man - revered, honored with a doctorate in music from Oxford University, free to go where he wished and to compose as he wished. One of the results was the set of 19 piano trios written in a period of six years, which deserve a great deal more attention than they have received of late. This evening, we will hear one of the very last of these sparkling works.

Haydn used these trios to explore bold key colors which would find their way into his last sets of quartets and the two great oratorios still to come: *The Seasons* and *The Creation*. With their high chromaticism (making use of notes that are not a part of the designated key signature) one could make a case for seeing in these trios the beginnings of the Romantic period soon to be ushered in by Beethoven.

The *Allegro* opening movement of tonight's trio is in sonata form. The exposition is deceptively easy-going as it leads to a development section which initially masquerades as a recapitulation. It soon becomes clear that a long development section is in progress, taking the listener through a remarkable series of key changes - from C major to G major (no surprises there), to A minor, E-flat minor, then to G-sharp major, D minor, A minor, B minor, and - finally - back to C and G major for the recapitulation. Quite a journey.

The second movement is an *Andante* in song form (ABA). Here the violin has more independence from the piano part (Haydn called these trios "sonatas for piano with violin and cello accompaniment") than was heard in the opening movement, while the *Finale. Presto* is a pianist's show piece, a *moto perpetuo* - perpetual motion - in rondo form, for which amateurs need not apply!

*Program note* © Nora Avins Klein, August, 2006

MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)

*Piano Trio in A Minor (1914)*

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 note © Margaret Bragg, July, 2006*

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

*Piano Trio in B-flat Major Op. 99 (1827?)*

"A glance at Schubert's Trio and all miserable human commotion vanishes, and the world shines in new splendor...Time, though producing much that is beautiful, will not soon produce another Schubert." Thus spoke Robert Schumann upon first acquaintance with tonight's Trio a decade after it was written. It is well known that Schubert died shortly before his 31st birthday in Vienna, the place of his birth. What is less known is the tremendous impact he had on his surviving contemporaries - Schumann, Brahms, Mendelssohn and Liszt - as his larger-scale, orchestral and chamber masterpieces slowly came to light. The existence of those compositions had been mostly unknown. It was through the devotion of his brother Ferdinand together with his admiring colleagues - giants of music in their own right who took time out of their busy schedules to salvage, edit, and perform his compositions - that the world at large received these works and Schubert attained a place in the pantheon reserved for genius.

Tonight's Piano Trio in B-flat Op. 99, the first of two wonderful works for this combination, was probably written down in the year before his death (the dated autograph is lost), shortly after Beethoven's demise. The 20 months between their two deaths saw a period of incredible industry on the part of Schubert as he seems to have understood that, with Beethoven's passing, he was the only one in Vienna capable of carrying on the great tradition started by Haydn. Of considerable technical challenge, the Trio was written with the knowledge that Beethoven's musicians were available to him to perform it and were, in fact, actively soliciting works from him.

The Trio opens with music of great freshness, optimism and vigor, followed by passages of exquisite delicacy. The thematic material is simple, framed in crystalline sonata form but woven into a fabric of most gorgeously shimmering colors. The recapitulation - the return to the beginning - introduces a bit of adventure, as the first theme returns in the "wrong" key, gyrating rather deliciously through several tonal regions to get home.

In contrast to the extroverted first movement, the second is deeply

introspective - a gentle song opening in the swaying rhythm of a Venetian barcarolle. Its mid-section (the movement is in ABA song form) is a pensive waltz. The third movement is a scherzo-trio, which opens with a paraphrase of the first movement's opening theme, played upside down. The trio section takes the form of a lyrical waltz.

The final movement, labeled *Rondo* but really in sonata form, sparkles with some of the same sonorities and ebullience of Schubert's earlier *Trout Quintet* - perhaps the result of its, too, having been written under the influence of a trip to the beautiful Austrian Alps during one of the few vacations Schubert took in his short and difficult life.

*Program note* © Nora Avins Klein, February, 2005

### *Vienna Piano Trio*

MATTHIAS GREDLER, VIOLONCELLO

STEFAN MENDL, PIANO

WOLFGANG REDIK, VIOLIN

In 1995, *Strad Magazine* wrote of their "meteoric rise to fame" and later in April 2000 that they were "fast becoming the leading trio of the 21st century." The *Times* gave them the accolade of "Classical Album of the Year" for their 2000 release of Beethoven: Piano Trios op.1 No. 2 & 3. "This youthful ensemble have rapidly established themselves as one of the finest chamber groups on the international circuit."

The Vienna Piano Trio was founded in 1988 by violinist Wolfgang Redik, cellist Marcus Trefny and pianist Stefan Mendl - all of whom studied extensively with the Trio di Trieste, the Haydn Trio-Vienna, the LaSalle Quartet and the Guarneri Quartet.

During the past several seasons they have bi-annually toured the USA and Canada, as well as having toured Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and Europe.

Their recordings for Nimbus Records have received highest critical acclaim. Stanley Sadie in *Gramophone* 1999 wrote, "these very musical young players seem to think and breathe as one...this is music-making of ravishing sensitivity and tonal command." They made 'Editors Choice' for *Gramophone* for their Haydn CD, and 'Classic CD Choice' for their Shostakovich/Schnittke and Mozart compact discs.

Having had a successful collaboration in 2002 with *Dabringhaus & Grimm* on Franz Schubert's complete works for piano-trios, the Vienna Piano Trio followed up in December 2003 with recording four more piano trios, but by Antonin Dvorak.