

Core Memory Music

Paddington Trio

Tuulia Hero, violin
Patrick Moriarty, cello
Stephanie Tang, piano

Saturday, March 23, 2024

PROGRAM

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)	Piano Trio in C minor, Op. 1 No. 3 <i>1. Allegro con brio</i> <i>2. Andante cantabile con Variazioni</i> <i>3. Menuetto. Quasi Allegro</i> <i>4. Finale. Prestissimo</i>	1795
Sam Perkin (1985–)	Freakshow <i>1. The Rat Circus</i> <i>2. The Two-Headed Nightingale</i> <i>3. The Living Skeleton</i> <i>4. The Gentle Giant</i> <i>5. The Angel of Death</i> <i>6. Pandora's Basket</i> <i>7. The Armless Fiddler</i>	2016
	<i>Intermission</i>	
Ellen Lindquist (1970–)	Shining Through	2023
Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975)	Piano Trio No. 2 in E minor, Op. 67 <i>1. Andante</i> <i>2. Allegro con brio</i> <i>3. Largo</i> <i>4. Allegretto</i>	1944

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Join us on Saturday, April 13, 2024 at 3:00 pm to hear violist Martine Thomas and pianist Jiarong Li perform works by J.S. Bach, R. Schumann, Britten, and Prokofiev.

BEETHOVEN: PIANO TRIO IN C MINOR, OP. 1 NO. 3

When the twenty-one-year-old Beethoven arrived in Vienna from his native Bonn in November 1792, the omens could hardly have been more favorable. Haydn, whom he had met in Bonn, had taken him on as a pupil, with all the cachet that implied; and through the recommendation of Count Waldstein, and Haydn's own contacts, the headstrong sans-culotte gained immediate access to the palaces and salons of the musically cultivated Viennese aristocracy. As Beethoven's own pupil Carl Czerny later put it, the youthful composer-virtuoso 'received all kinds of support from our high aristocracy, and enjoyed as much care and respect as were ever enjoyed by a young artist'.

Within weeks of his arrival in the imperial capital Beethoven became a house guest of his principal patron Prince Karl Lichnowsky, a talented amateur pianist who kept his own string quartet. The Prince held regular private soirées at which Beethoven would astonish the company with his brilliant keyboard improvisations; and it was at one of these occasions that he chose to introduce his first important Viennese compositions, the set of three piano trios which he published by subscription in August 1795 with a dedication to Lichnowsky. His erstwhile teacher Haydn, recently returned from his second triumphant London visit, was present, and warmly praised the E flat and G major trios. But he suggested that the third trio, in C minor, would not be easily understood by the Viennese public—a well-intentioned remark that the ever-touchy Beethoven put down to envy.

Beethoven was determined to impress and challenge the Viennese musical elite with his first published opus. And with their weighty four-movement structures and urgency of musical dialectic, the Op 1 trios must have seemed like a full-frontal assault on the traditional notion of the piano trio: what had been an intimate domestic medium in Mozart's and Haydn's hands suddenly became a symphony for three instruments. In the first two trios Beethoven's subversiveness was still cloaked in the language of the classical comedy of manners. But in the C minor, No 3, it erupted in a work of startling explosive vehemence and dark lyric beauty. While it may have shocked some of its early listeners, Haydn included, the C minor Trio gradually became one of Beethoven's most popular chamber works.

Notes by Richard Wigmore

SAM PERKIN: FREAKSHOW

Irish composer Sam Perkin, born 1985, writes new orchestral, chamber, instrumental, and choral music. He first earned his bachelor's degree in music and a master's degree in composition at the CIT Cork School of Music in Ireland. He then completed his artistic diploma in composition at the Conservatoire national supérieur musique et danse de Lyon in France.

Perkin's 2016 piano trio "Freakshow" was commissioned by the Gŵyl Gregynog Festival, the oldest classical music festival in Wales. "Freakshow" was composed in honor of the centenary of the Easter Rising, the 1916 armed Irish insurrection against British rule. The rebellion was soon quashed, sixteen rebels were executed, and 1800 prisoners were transported to the Welsh internment camp at Fron-Goch where they were detained from June to December, 1916.

"Freakshow" was inspired by stories of the dismal conditions in the prison camp. According to one account, the entire camp was so overrun with rats that one prisoner went to great lengths to catch and feature them in a "Rat Circus" that he presented for the entertainment of his fellow inmates. The macabre tone of this story prompted Sam Perkin to write a set of musically diverse miniatures that draw on themes of captivity and spectacle as points of departure. "Freakshow" is a set of imaginative musical portraits of historical figures whose physical deformities were exhibited as carnival and circus sideshow spectacles during mid-19th and early 20th centuries. Each movement represents a different performer:

1. The Rat Circus provides a brief sonic image of the viciously squeaking and skittering rats in the prisoner's circus at Fron-Goch Internment Camp.

2. The Two-Headed Nightingale is a delicately grotesque waltz evoking a stage performance by the conjoined African American twins, Millie and Christine McCoy, who traveled the world during the mid-19th century as popular song and dance entertainers. Over the course of their lives, they overcame years of slavery, forced medical observation, and degrading participation in fairs and freak shows.

3. The Living Skeleton is a feather-weight musical depiction of Issac W. Sprague whom PT Barnum showcased in the 1860s as “The Original Thin Man.” At age 44, Sprague was 5 feet and 6 inches tall but weighted only 43 pounds.
4. The Gentle Giant is a gently ironic, pizzicato portrait of the massive Robert Wadlow, who grew to be the tallest person in recorded history. At the time of his death in 1940, Wadlow had grown to the height of 8 feet, 11.1 inches.
5. The Angel of Death is a hauntingly chorale-like sketch of the malicious Josef Mengele, the fearsome Nazi doctor who performed genetic experiments on captives at Auschwitz. Among his subjects were the seven members of the Ovitz Family, an imprisoned family of Jewish Hungarian dwarves who made their living as entertainers. Menegle kept them alive as subjects for his pseudoscientific experiments on heredity.
6. Pandora’s Basket was inspired by a famous early 20th-century contortionist named Li Yeng. The armless and legless Chinese performer became known as the “Basket Lady of Weijing Province,” since she was small enough to sit in a basket only several inches deep. With its evocative hints of chinoiserie, the movement is the most emotionally far-ranging in the set, vacillating between diaphanous, filigreed textures and more forceful displays of Ravel-like virtuosity.
7. The upbeat final movement, The Armless Fiddler, is a toe-tapping celebration of Carl Herman Unthan, an armless, Prussian-born violinist and actor who learned to play the violin with his feet by strapping the instrument to a stool. He became such an accomplished performer that he appeared as a soloist with many European orchestras and lectured to injured German World War I veterans about how to retrain their legs and feet to take over for their missing upper limbs. In the Armless Fiddler, Sam Perkin creates a jauntily pizzicato Irish jig to summon Unthan’s indomitable spirit.

Notes by Michael Parloff

ELLEN LINDQUIST: SHINING THROUGH

The music of Ellen Lindquist is performed regularly throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe, and has also been performed throughout the world. Discovery of unique sound-worlds through collaboration is central to Ellen’s work; several of her pieces involve dance, theatre, poetry, and performance art. A deep respect for and love of the natural world is reflected in her work.

The piano trio "Shining Through" was commissioned by the Trondheim International Chamber Music Competition.

SHOSTAKOVICH: PIANO TRIO NO. 2 IN E MINOR, OP. 67

Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony, written in 1943 was "not recommended" for performance by the Communist Party. Nevertheless he was made Professor of Composition at the Moscow Conservatoire soon after. This was the knife edge of music and politics on which Shostakovich lived.

The trio is dedicated to his colleague, mentor, and life-long friend Ivan Sollertinsky, a Jewish musicologist, who died in 1944. One of the great piano trios, it speaks powerfully and directly about grief and loss. It can be seen not just as a lament for a dear friend and colleague, but for the sufferings of a whole nation. Yet there is also the tenacity of life in adverse circumstances, and even if this sounds forced and bitter at times, it still persists. Musically, the work seems to push the chamber ensemble to the limits of what it can achieve without becoming an orchestra. In its use of harmonics, the wide spacing piano writing, extreme dynamics, the use of chromaticism and dissonance within a strong sense of tonality all contribute to its special sound world.

Notes by Janet Upward