



**SUMMER FESTIVAL IN SEATTLE**

**SUNDAY, JULY 17, 2011**

**Vincent d'Indy**

Quartet for Piano and Strings, Op. 7

*Allegro non troppo*

*Ballade: Andante moderato*

*Allegro vivo*

Erin Keefe, violin Richard O'Neill, viola

Bion Tsang, cello Jeewon Park, piano

**Charles Ives**

Largo for Violin, Clarinet and Piano

Erin Keefe, violin Sean Osborn, clarinet Jeremy Denk, piano

**Johannes Brahms**

Trio for Clarinet, Cello and Piano in A minor, Op. 114

*Allegro*

*Adagio*

*Andante grazioso*

*Allegro*

Sean Osborn, clarinet Godfried Hoogeveen, cello Jeremy Denk, piano

**Ludwig van Beethoven**

Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano in B-flat Major, Op. 97 "Archduke"

*Allegro moderato*

*Scherzo: Allegro*

*Andante cantabile, ma pero con moto*

*Allegro moderato*

Amy Schwartz Moretti, violin Edward Arron, cello Alon Goldstein, piano

**Vincent d'Indy (1851–1931)**

Quartet for Piano and Strings, Op. 7 (1878)

Vincent D'Indy was born into an old aristocratic Parisian family with pronounced royalist inclinations wedded to ardent and conservative Catholicism. During the notorious Dreyfus Affair he sided with the right-wing contingent (as, sadly, did Debussy), becoming increasingly anti-Semitic for the remainder of his life. Despite his ferocious nationalism and antipathy toward Jews and other non-natives, he was accorded respect

from many contemporary musicians, including those with strongly opposing political and social views. D'Indy's animus extended to "modern" music, assailing the works of Arnold Schoenberg (whom he characterized as "a madman who teaches nothing except that you should write everything that comes into your head...His work...is no more than a mass of meaningless notes"). He also included Edgard Varèse in his ongoing diatribes against radicalism in that sacred art. He was a committed worshipper at the shrine of Wagner, attending the premiere of *The Ring of the Nibelung* at Bayreuth in 1876.

Today D'Indy's reputation rests almost exclusively on his attractive piano with orchestral score, *Symphony on a French Mountain Air*. Although he composed operas as well as other symphonic and chamber works, he was more highly regarded by his contemporaries as an important teacher whose students included Erik Satie and Bohuslav Martinů. He also wrote major biographies of his primary teacher, César Franck, and of Beethoven.

D'Indy composed the *Quartet for Piano and Strings, Op. 7* in 1878, shortly after completing studies with Franck. Understandably the imprint of his mentor is heard through the young composer's use of cyclical technique of thematic transformation. So too, one catches hints of D'Indy's adulation of Richard Wagner.

Traditional sonata-allegro form guides the opening *Allegro non troppo* through its paces, including the once-obligatory repeat of the exposition, which added stature-enhancing length to the movement; it is almost as long as the remaining two movements combined. Two primary themes differ in their time signatures 6/8 and 2/4 respectively (bearing in mind that 6/8 is *not* triple meter but in fact duple meter where the strong beats are on the first and fourth notes). Roiling tremolos from the piano underlie a flowing theme first uttered by the cello. The music rolls along lyrically but with an ebb and flow of dynamics and emotional intensity. The piano tremolo adds urgency that animates the movement. A series of chords from the keyboard periodically reminds us of his mentor. Elsewhere the piano scurries up and down the keyboard while the strings elaborate on long-flowing melodic contours.

An especially Franckian theme from the low strings opens the ensuing *Ballade: Andante moderato*. Arpeggio chords in the keyboard support rapturous melody. Moments of spare instrumentation add intimacy. Much of the string writing resides in the middle and low registers, again not unlike his teacher. Though composed a decade before Franck's *Symphony in D minor*, the shape of D'Indy's themes suggest that the tunes from that popular symphony were cut from a pattern that weaves through Franck's earlier work as well.

The concluding *Rondo, Allegro vivo* sounds notably brighter than movements I and II, gracefully and even playfully casting the somber ambience of Franck and Teutonic gravitas of Wagner out the window. As in the opening movement the themes vary in time signature, in this case alternating between 9/8 and 3/4. D'Indy pays homage to cyclic technique by quoting the primary theme of the *Ballade* before ending in a mood of joyous energy.

### **Charles Ives (1874–1954)**

Largo for Violin, Clarinet and Piano (1901)

With a mix of love and audacity Charles Ives quoted American hymns and folk music in his compositions, mixing traditional harmonies with often startling dissonances. A “weekend composer” (but emphatically *not* an amateur), Ives’ “9-5” job was in insurance. He believed that by not relying on music for a livelihood, he was free to compose music according to his own inner voice—shades of Emerson and Thoreau. His music was long misunderstood; many of his works did not receive first performances for many decades after he composed them. Though today his place in the American pantheon of composers seems assured, there remain musicians and audiences who still scratch their collective heads about this latter-day Transcendentalist.

His early Largo for Violin, Clarinet and Piano began as a piece for violin and organ solo before the composer decided to incorporate the short work into what is known as the “Pre-First Violin Sonata” that never saw the light of day. In 1901, he settled on a version for the three above-mentioned instruments; this version *may* have been revised in 1934. Even the current *Grove Dictionary* puts a question mark before the date of the entry on the revision.

A solemn piano introduction with slowly moving, somewhat dissonant harmonies sets the mood for the violin’s line. Despite frequent jumps and descents to distant intervals, the music is both sweetly nostalgic and anxious. After a brief pause, the clarinet enters, heightening the energy and enriching the textures. Syncopated rhythms and a spicy harmonic language add a degree of angst. The quiet opening measures are reprised in spirit if not exactly note-for-note as the piece draws to an enigmatic close.

### **Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)**

Trio for Clarinet, Cello and Piano in A minor, Op. 114 (1891)

After notifying his publisher, Simrock, that no further compositions would be forthcoming, Brahms had a change of heart. The primary reason: a visit—his second—to Meiningen in 1891 when he met that city’s orchestra’s principal clarinetist, Richard Muhlfeld. Clearly smitten by Muhlfeld’s musicianship, Brahms felt inspired to compose four superb chamber works featuring the clarinet. Three of these late-life pieces are quite popular among chamber aficionados, i.e., the Clarinet Quintet and the two Sonatas for Clarinet and Piano. Brahms’ avowed personal favorite was the Trio for Clarinet, Cello and Piano, yet it has not enjoyed the kind of continuing enthusiasm of its brethren.

Dating from the same year as the Clarinet Quintet, the Trio is, in the words of the late composer and astute commentator Robert Simpson, the “knottier and more elliptical of the two; it is intensely compact and its first movement is one of the most disturbed pieces Brahms ever wrote.” If less emotionally available than the beloved Quintet, the Trio invites the listener to delve more deeply to find resonances to Brahms’ inner feelings. Then too, the clarinet part—so unabashedly fervent in the Quintet—is less so in the Trio, where it often seems to serve as an obbligato to the cello’s lofty melodic lines.

In fact, it is the cello that introduces both themes of the somber opening *Allegro*. The flowing initial theme begins in a typically Brahmsian elegiac fashion but shortly swings into a clipped and agitated mode of expression. So too with the second theme; it begins quietly in C major with another broadly paced tune and quickly moves into E minor where it becomes increasingly restive, even disruptive. The development section fitfully moves through primarily minor keys, creating an atmosphere of eeriness transformed into aggressiveness. The recapitulation does not return to the relative calm of the opening, but becomes even more *Angst*-laden. The coda seems to settle into ostensibly brighter A Major before ominous shadows intrude, ending the movement with a sense of discomfort.

The following *Adagio* in D Major exudes undeniable warmth, yet here too, the music is less peaceful than quietly intense. Two long-breathed melodies shape the movement, enhanced by Brahms' ability to utilize the wide compass and broad timbral range of the cello and clarinet.

Marked *Andante grazioso*, the third movement conjures the grace and ease of a Viennese waltz, yet at various points makes the three-to-a-bar rhythm hard to discern—not exactly what one expects in a waltz! The mid-movement Trio, however, brings unblemished joy.

Atypical not only for Brahms, the sun does not re-emerge in the finale. Instead, this *Allegro* remains determinedly in the minor mode; the intermixing of 6/8 and 2/4 meters reasserts the agitation of the opening movement.

### **Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)**

Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano in B-flat Major, Op. 97, “Archduke” (1811)

Beethoven's most celebrated works *in toto* are unquestionably his 16 string quartets, but his seven piano trios are worthy contenders for highest honors as well. The best-known of his works in this genre is the Piano Trio in B-flat Major, Op. 97, best known by its nickname “Archduke.” Beethoven composed the music in 1811, a year marked by great political and social upheaval in Vienna. In general, the age of aristocratic sponsorship was coming to an end, to be supplanted by the growing wealth, power and largesse of the rapidly emerging bourgeoisie. Ironic, then, that in the midst of this paradigm shift, Beethoven should dedicate the work to his long-time friend, patron and student, Archduke Rudolf, younger brother of the Emperor Leopold II.

Due to great political turmoil in Viennese life, three years had to elapse between the year of composition—1811—and its premiere three years later. Not even Beethoven's great fame could ensure a quicker turnaround. On that occasion in 1814, fellow composer Ludwig (aka Louis) Spohr wrote of Beethoven's performance of the keyboard part: “In *forte* passages the poor deaf man pounded on the keys until the strings jangled, and in *piano* he played so softly that whole groups of notes were omitted.” Beethoven's friend and biographer Anton Schindler noted that due to increasing deafness, the composer “withdrew forever from public view as a performing artist.”

The primary theme of the opening *Allegro moderato* eschews the big, bold and heroic character of his typical middle period music. (The assigned opus number of 97 puts it on the cusp of his late works). Rather, it has more in common with the comparatively lyrical and poetic music he penned at the time, e.g., the Violin Concerto, Fourth Piano Concerto and “Pastoral” Symphony. The graceful and flowing opening theme begins with understated though entrancing warmth. After some lovely bridging passages, a second and more pointed theme emerges in a series of descending phrases. Construction is fairly straightforward in its sonata-allegro format, but it is the music’s blend of nobility and expressive richness that stamps a seal of greatness on the piece.

As in the later Ninth Symphony, Beethoven follows the initial movement with a *Scherzo*. Marked *Allegro*, the cello gets things underway with a humor-filled rhythmic figure. In the Trio it is also the cello that posits a contrasting chromatic figure that serves as that section’s primary theme. A second tune, rustic and dancelike, soon emerges. Both the *Scherzo* proper and the Trio are repeated before a coda brings the movement to an end.

The third movement, *Andante cantabile, ma pero con moto* grows from an unassuming yet ravishing hymn-like tune that undergoes a sequence of five variations that maintain the overall melodic and harmonic contour of the theme while exploring life-giving rhythmic variants in the music. The movement breathes the air of much-needed serenity, a state of being belied by the vicissitudes of his personal life and the political and social maelstrom of the Austrian capital in 1811.

Marked *attacca* (essentially “without pause”), the concluding *Allegro moderato* stomps heartily into the fray, humorously giving the boot to the noble calm of the preceding movement. Bristling with energy and down-to-earth dancelike vitality, the spirit of *yang* herein replaces the *yin* of the *Andante cantabile*. In the face of a great cultural dislocation, the mood is unfailingly upbeat and humorous rather than forcefully dramatic.

**Program Notes by Steven Lowe**