



SUMMER FESTIVAL IN SEATTLE

SATURDAY, JULY 23, 2011

R. Murray Schafer

Trio for Flute, Viola and Harp

Freely flowing

Slowly, calmly

Rhythmic

Lorna McGhee, flute David Harding, viola Heidi Krutzen, harp

****U.S. Premiere****

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Quintet for 2 Violins, 2 Violas and Cello in G minor, K. 516

Allegro

Menuetto: Allegretto

Adagio ma non troppo

Adagio

Allegro

Erin Keefe, violin James Ehnes, violin David Harding, viola

Richard O'Neill, viola Robert deMaine, cello

Antonín Dvořák

Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano in E minor, Op. 90 "Dumky"

Lento maestoso—Allegro vivace

Poco adagio—Vivace non troppo

Andante—Vivace non troppo

Andante moderato—Allegretto scherzando

Lento maestoso—Vivace

Amy Schwartz Moretti, violin Johannes Moser, cello Alon Goldstein, piano

R. Murray Schafer (b. 1933)

Trio for Flute, Viola and Harp (2011)

Born in Sarnia, Ontario R. (Raymond) Murray Schafer has established himself in the forefront of Canadian composers as well as earning recognition for his work as a writer, music educator and environmentalist. His educational background includes musical studies at the Royal Schools of Music in London, the Royal Academy of Music and the University of Toronto where he was a student of Richard Johnston. Widespread recognition includes the Jules Léger Prize (1978), the Glenn Gould Prize (1987), and the

Walter Carsen Prize (2005) by the Canada Council for the Arts. In 2009, he received the Governor General's Performing Arts Award for Lifetime Artistic Achievement. His influence in the broad world of music and communication even includes credit for the concept of "soundscape," as well as coining the term "schizophonia," or the splitting of a sound from its source or the condition caused by this split.

The Seattle Chamber Music Society is grateful to flutist Lorna McGhee for providing the following annotation on Schafer's Trio for Flute, Viola and Harp:

"We are delighted to be giving the US premiere of R. Murray Schafer's "Trio for Flute Viola and Harp" at the Seattle Chamber Music Festival. Commissioning is an important aspect of our engagement with music, and we are grateful to the Seattle audience for the opportunity to share this wonderful new piece! Working closely with R. Murray Schafer on this Trio has been one of the highlights of our musical lives. His ability to listen so deeply both internally and externally is remarkable. The experience was both profound and inspiring.

"The first movement [*Freely flowing*] is predominantly lyrical, full of cascading figures and overlapping rhythms. The effect is a very fluid, almost impressionistic texture, with ebb and flow – living, breathing organism rather than three separate voices. The opening flute motive is especially important as it reappears in various guises in both the first and second movements. Its first statement is delicate and lyrical in the flute, but it undergoes many later transformations and inversions – at times passionate and emphatic, or in the viola solos, mournful and hesitant until, at the end of the movement, it returns with joyful exuberance. In this movement, whenever the music threatens to sink into melancholy, a bright dance-like, rhythmic force takes over and propels the music forward. Moments of nostalgia are interrupted by rhythmic outbursts, creating a dynamic interplay. The tonal language is full of rich sonorities and unusual, otherworldly colors (such as high viola harmonics an octave above the flute).

"The second movement [*slowly, calmly*] opens with an incredible sense of hush – as if entering a sacred space. Murray himself was surprised by what he described as the 'hymn-like' nature of the opening – an element that returns throughout the movement only to be interrupted by more active rhapsodic passages – as if the two are in a struggle with each other. For me, there is a very strong 'fin-de-siècle' feeling in this movement – moments of extreme romanticism, as in early Schoenberg. Murray's choice to combine the alto flute and viola in this movement is absolutely magical! At the end of the movement, although there is again the sense of hush, there is no resolution. As with the Debussy [identically scored] sonata, the lack of resolution in the second movement acts as a kind of a pivot or hinge, creating a sense of anticipation before entering into the third movement.

"The third movement [*rhythmic*] is characterized by its wild, folk-like rhythms and driving ostinatos. Constantly shifting meters create an edgy, impulsive quality. The primary feeling of this movement is visceral—it is a dance. There is a brief moment of respite, where the flute sings a bluesy, whimsical riff over an ostinato in viola and harp,

but then the wild opening material returns and drives the piece at break-neck speed to its conclusion.”

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

Viola Quintet in G minor, K.516 (1787)

The string quartet has been the primary format for chamber music since Haydn nurtured the genre in his 80-plus quartets. His efforts spawned an ongoing explosion of quartet writing, famously taken up by Mozart in his “Six Quartets Dedicated to Haydn” and followed by Beethoven and countless composers to this day. The credit for adding a viola to create a string quintet goes to Luigi Boccherini from whose prolific pen emerged a dozen such works (in addition to 110 cello quintets!). As with Haydn’s quartets, Mozart followed suit, creating six string quintets from adolescence through the years of his maturity in Vienna. Although he was a violin-playing concertmaster during his early teens, his expressed preference in performing chamber music (with Haydn, no less) was for the viola. He enjoyed the experience of being “inside” the textures. Whether this is what prompted him to write his quintets (which are outnumbered in any case by his 21 string quartets), the texture-enriching sonorities achieved by the addition of a second viola may also have been on his mind.

Of his half-dozen string quintets, it is No. 5, K. 516 that remains one of the great examples of the medium. Cast in G minor, a key of special expressive significance for Mozart, the quintet gives voice to a depth of emotion and agitation that figure in other works in the same key, such as both the “Little” G-minor Symphony, K. 183, and *the* G-minor Symphony, K. 550, the latter composed one year after the K. 516 quintet. There is also a powerful piano quartet in G minor, K. 478. If Beethoven poured his emotional conflicts into C-minor (Fifth Symphony, *Pathétique* Piano Sonata, the third Op. 1 piano trio and his final piano sonata, among others), G minor was Mozart’s favored key for giving a musical voice to darker emotions and inner turmoil.

The sorrowful character of this piece begins in the first several measures of the opening *Allegro*. Spasmodic melodic fragments convey the sound and almost physical presence of deep sighs and anxious gasps. Cast in sonata form, the music has irresistible sweeping power that intensifies deep tragic feeling. In an era when most music avoided minor tonality, its prevailing grief must have been especially gripping to late Classical period musicians and auditors.

Labeled *Menuetto: Allegretto*, it is hard to conceive of a less courtly “dance” than the second movement. A lugubrious cantabile melody is punctuated by thudding heavily accented chords and is further darkened through extensive chromatic alteration. *Forte* chord outbursts anticipate Beethoven’s *sforzandos*, rendered all the more potent by contrast with an unabashedly sweet counter melody by the violin. The trio brings emotional reprieve through a shift to a major-key version of the somber opening theme.

The entire third movement, *Adagio ma non troppo*, is played with mutes on all five instruments. This “covered sound” adds to the extraordinary pathos of this music.

Mozart inserts an *Adagio* in the minor mode that serves as an introduction to the concluding *Allegro*. Unremittingly dirge-like, the first violin bears almost exclusive command over the melodic line, while pulse is maintained by the cello's *pizzicatos* and nudging chords from the three inner voices

After a brief pause, the *Allegro* sweeps aside the gloomy atmosphere of all that has preceded it. The primary melodic material bears a family resemblance to the very theme that opens the first movement, yet it now dances happily toward an optimistic conclusion that fits the best-of-all-possible world of Classical-era esthetics. During the succeeding Romantic and modern periods the joyful major-key demeanor of this movement has been found glib and superficial by some listeners and players alike. Yet one may ask whether the finale is really a “happy ending” or an intentionally ambiguous “smiling through the tears?”

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano in E minor, Op. 90, “Dumky” (1891)

Much of Dvořák's initial support came from musicians and audiences in non-Czech areas. Among fellow composers his strongest ally was Johannes Brahms, who as a German nationalist viewed unification under Bismarck as one of the two greatest joys of his life—the other being the publication of the complete works of Bach. Brahms knew a good composer when he saw one, and was quick to recommend Dvořák's music to his own publisher, Simrock. Dvořák's musical enthusiasms reached far beyond his beloved Bohemian countryside, and many of his orchestral works revel in a Wagnerian sound world, while others demonstrate a Brahmsian cast most noticeable in the great Symphony No. 7 in D minor. A third group, typified by the *Slavonic Dances* and 8th Symphony, speak in native Bohemian accents, his “natural” musical language.

Dvořák's abundant chamber music reveals these influences, especially his virtually innate Bohemian musical blood mixed with Brahms' magisterial grandeur and structure. Even when strongly Brahmsian, Dvořák infuses the textures with melodic snippets and chord progressions unequivocally Czech, and in the midst of his most unbuttoned Czech rusticity, a rigorous formal schema evokes the mental processes of Brahms.

Four works constitute Dvořák's piano trio canon, of which two early examples failed to survive the composer's trash bin. Dating from 1891, the “Dumky” Trio is the last of the lot and the best known. Unlike the first three extant trios—each cast in traditional classical sonata structure and overall layout—the “Dumky” is more like a suite, but of mood rather than of dance rhythms. Six two-part *dumky* (plural of the singular *dumka*) constitute this folk-inspired work. Dvořák was clearly laying the groundwork for a retreat from the classical forms of his middle years (most tellingly represented by the ultra-Brahmsian F-minor Trio, Op. 65 of 1883), a journey that would culminate in his late-life tone poems and the opera *Rusalka*.

A *dumka* is a Slavic folk song conveying melancholy and wistfulness relieved by contrasting interludes that range from the quietly lyrical to near mania. Though forward looking, Dvorák keeps one toe in the past: there is an internal unity in this work that nods toward classical form and avoids the pastiche. The first three *dumky*, played without pause, more or less correspond to a first movement, albeit one with an engaging variety of moods. The fourth *dumka*, somber and deliberate, is the traditional slow movement, while the two remaining movements function respectively as a scherzo and a rondo finale.

Program Notes by Steven Lowe