

SEATTLE
CHAMBER
MUSIC
SOCIETY



**WINTER
FESTIVAL**

JANUARY 24, 2016 – 3:00 PM

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Sonata for Violin and Piano in A Major, K. 526

Allegro molto

Andante

Presto

Alexander Kerr *violin* / **Max Levinson** *piano*

KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI

Trio for Strings

Allegro molto—Andante—Allegro molto

Vivace

Erin Keefe *violin* / **Rebecca Albers** *viola* / **Edward Arron** *cello*

INTERMISSION

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano in F minor, Op. 65

Allegro ma non troppo

Allegretto grazioso

Poco adagio

Allegro con brio

James Ehnes *violin* / **Robert deMaine** *cello* / **Andrew Armstrong** *piano*

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

(1756–1791)

Sonata for Violin and Piano in A Major, K. 526 (1787)

In 1787, Mozart was riding the crest of his Viennese popularity. Piano concertos flowed from his pen in easy abundance. *The Marriage of Figaro*, wildly successful and scarcely a year-old, was followed by the emotionally ambivalent *Don Giovanni*, that dark yet comedic *dramma giocoso* that gave theatrical vent to Mozart's potently haunted side. His father, guardian and tormentor in equal measure, died on May 28. The mixture of grief, relief and guilt coursed through Mozart as a curse, at times insinuating itself into his music, at other times in seeming total absence. Rife in *Don Giovanni*, K. 527, the heavy emotional charge is nowhere to be heard in the simultaneously composed *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, K. 525.

Sandwiched between these two masterworks is the Sonata, K. 526, which steers a middle course between the masterly simplicity and buoyancy of the *Nachtmusik* and the heavy emotional undercurrent of the *Don*. Marked *Allegro molto*, its energetic first movement in rapid 6/8 time bristles with energy and finds the composer straddling two worlds—the contrapuntal felicity of the Baroque and the urbane grace of the *stile galant*. Here and elsewhere in this mature work, Mozart writes in essentially three remarkably independent voices—the right and left hands of the piano, and, of course, the violin. The two tendencies of classic grace and baroque fulsomeness are held in exquisite balance.

The *Andante*, the longest movement and the sonata's emotional core, poses a steady walking gait of eighth notes, often in the piano's nether regions, against long-breathed and lovely melodies from the violin, while the pianist's right hand offers complementary commentary. The spare textures, replete with frequent unisons and octaves, nonetheless convey emotional breadth and harmonic richness.

The concluding *Presto* brushes aside all grief and introspection in a spirited contest between two racing virtuosos, each outdoing the other in syncopation and unbridled élan. Ironically perhaps, the movement's main theme was taken by Mozart from a work by fellow composer and friend, Carl Friedrich Abel, who had died in June, only weeks after Mozart's father. A fitting homage then, one step removed from the real dedicatee of his efforts.

KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI

(b. 1933)

Trio for Strings (1990–91)

Along with his noted colleagues Witold Lutosławski and Grazyna Bacewics, Penderecki brought 20th-century Poland renewed acclaim to its native composers. In 1954, Penderecki began studies in composition at the Krakow Academy of Music. Four years later he was appointed professor at that august institution; a year later he won all three prizes from the II Warsaw Competition for Young Composers. Over the next several years his reputation spread to include an international audience, furthered especially by the performance of his *St. Luke Passion* in 1966.

Three decades later the German String Trio commissioned and premiered his Trio for Strings. The three-part opening movement, *Allegro molto—Andante—Allegro molto* starts with a series of aggressive slashing and chugging chords that yield to a long exploratory line from the viola, interrupted at times by repeated iterations of the slashing motif. After the viola has had its say the cello assumes dominance until the harsh chords serve to pass the baton to the violin. Each solo episode functions as a virtual cadenza. A mid-movement *Andante* is launched by the violin before the three musicians trade mysterious and murmuring phrases. A faster tempo marks a return to mood of the initial *Allegro*. Periodic squeaky *sul ponticello* bowings add gritty color and anxiety to the already anxious movement.

The concluding *Vivace* begins with a long quirky chromatic line treated contrapuntally. Slashing

chords recall Movement I and gain in both length and fervor in subsequent appearances. A central episode brings pointilistic interplay among the instruments. The movement ends with a short and emphatic *duh, duh, duh, DUH* figure.

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

(1841–1904)

Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano in F minor, Op. 65 (1883)

Dvořák set his name to six piano trios including at least two early attempts that he—figuratively, at least—cast into the wood stove. The Op. 21 and 26 trios, written respectively in 1875 and 1876 are works of his relative youth, or perhaps we should say “maturation,” since the process was still evolving. The year 1883 saw the creation of his F-minor Piano Trio, Op. 65, written when the composer had truly established his mastery. More than the earlier published trios as well as the Op. 90 “Dumky” Trio, the F-minor work bears the imposing presence of Brahms in its solid technique and impressive craftsmanship, but the Bohemian soul of Dvořák’s inner being weaves through the textures nonetheless. The Op. 65 Trio has strong dramatic and elegiac aspects, no doubt reflecting the death of the composer’s mother shortly before he began composing it.

The spirit and sound-world of Brahms, early advocate and lifelong friend, infuses the opening *Allegro ma non troppo*. The two-part main theme begins quietly in unison strings before the piano forcefully introduces the powerful second part. The music is filled with ardor, galvanized by a surging quality. Eventually, the cello presents the entire expressive and flowing theme, accompanied by the piano. The relatively brief development section begins with the reappearance of the first part of the main theme on cello followed by the violin. Shortly thereafter, the second element moves canonically in the strings and then emerges in a broad and spacious version on the cello. In contrast, ominous passages on the piano interrupt the recapitulation, offset by questioning phrases in the strings. Both parts of the theme unite and lead to a powerful coda.

Marked *Allegretto grazioso*, the second movement quickly establishes Dvořák’s “voice” and functions as a melancholic *scherzo* featuring a folk-like tune that suggests a sad Slavonic dance. The piano states the theme against a persistent staccato in the strings. The *meno mosso* Trio provides an appropriately contrasting mood, essentially sung by the strings in a smooth, relaxed style. Here, too, his model is Brahms.

The cello opens the ensuing *Poco adagio* supported by sparse chords from the piano. The violin and cello restate the initial sad, sighing theme. Soon, however, the violin introduces a tender, lyrical tune that briefly lightens the overall mood. As the movement unfolds, the music becomes increasingly agitated during a lengthy crescendo leading to a powerful climax. At length, the opening tune from the first movement reappears. In a coda Dvořák juxtaposes other previously heard tunes as well.

The dramatic finale employs a *furiant* as its main subject. This Bohemian dance—often used by Dvořák—creates a *scherzo*-like atmosphere, but on a grand scale. Yet structurally it is a strictly worked-out sonata-rondo form that again recalls Brahms. Dvořák dismantles the theme, using its composite fragments as a bonding agent to unify the entire movement. A second waltz-like subject is introduced before the main theme returns and leads directly into the development. The music builds to an imposing climax followed by a well-calculated pause; again the music surges up tsunami-like from a pianissimo to another hortatory blast that ends on a second silence. Then, as the tension accumulates in a statement of the opening *furiant*, the composer deftly moves to F Major and brings back the main theme from the first movement. But he is not finished: the waltz returns briefly before reprising the opening *furiant*; it is a final spirited dash resolutely in the major.

Program Notes by Steven Lowe
