

# SUMMER FESTIVAL

MONDAY, JULY 22, 2013

8:00 PM

SEATTLE  
CHAMBER  
MUSIC  
SOCIETY

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PROGRAM

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LEONARD BERNSTEIN\*

*Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano*

Adagio non troppo—Allegro vivace

Tempo di marcia

Largo—Allegro vivo e molto ritmico

**Erin Keefe** violin / **Amit Peled** cello / **Adam Neiman** piano

CHARLES IVES\*

*Largo for Violin, Clarinet and Piano*

**Amy Schwartz Moretti** violin / **Ricardo Morales** clarinet / **Anna Polonsky** piano

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

*Trio for Clarinet, Viola and Piano in E-flat Major, K. 498 “Kegelstatt”*

Andante

Menuetto and Trio

Rondeaux: Allegretto

**Ricardo Morales** clarinet / **Richard O’Neill** viola / **Orion Weiss** piano

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INTERMISSION

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ELLIOTT CARTER\*

*Elegy*

**Richard O’Neill** viola / **Anna Polonsky** piano

ROBERT SCHUMANN

*Quartet for Piano and Strings in E-flat Major, Op. 47*

Sostenuto assai—Allegro ma non troppo

Scherzo: Molto vivace

Andante cantabile

Finale: Vivace

**Amy Schwartz Moretti** violin / **David Harding** viola / **Robert deMaine** cello / **Anna Polonsky** piano

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\*LIVE CONCERT RECORDING

## LEONARD BERNSTEIN

(1918–1990)

### *Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano (1937)*

Among the best-known American musicians of the 20th century, Leonard Bernstein was a true polymath, bringing passion and great skill to his multiple roles as conductor, pianist, teacher and composer. In that last-named capacity, his far-reaching interests led him to compose music that tapped into American jazz and pop, as well as the inherited legacy of traditional classical music. His canon of works covers a broad spectrum including film scores, Broadway musicals and the full range of orchestral, chamber and vocal/choral works. Harmonically, Bernstein's scores show a strong allegiance to tonality spiced with pithy dissonances, while some works draw upon the atonality and serial ("12-tone") techniques developed by Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg and Anton Webern, the so-called "Second Viennese School" (as opposed to the "First," comprised of Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert).

The 19-year-old composer fashioned the Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano while a student at Harvard University under Walter Piston. Years later Bernstein reused some of the music from the Trio, e.g., the opening of the second movement found new life in the musical *On the Town*.

Marked *Adagio non troppo*, the first section of the opening movement sets the initial mood with a sad and lyrical tune heard first from the cello, followed quasi-canonically by the violin and then by the piano. The engaging theme goes through expanded development when all three players join forces with the strings on melody enriched by rippling arpeggios on the piano. The pace quickens in the *Allegro vivace* second part of the movement, galvanized by punching chords, Baroque-like keyboard figure and rapid runs derived from the melody. A slow reprise of the opening tune begins in unison fortissimo that dies away to a whisper with a sweet melody on violin over a slow walking cello line.

The second movement, *Tempo di Marcia*, is a set of variations rife with "blue" notes from jazz. As one might expect the music is filled with buoyant energy and

humorous asides, heard immediately in the pizzicato string opening, and lots of syncopation. Quirky stop-and-start variations dot the landscape and provide contrasting sonorities from the ever-changing partnerships among the instruments.

A tender variant of the work's first movement's main theme quietly sets the *Largo* in slow motion but soon evolves into an *Allegro vivo e molto ritmico* that begins with a rapid walking bass in the cello before jumping forward with great hammering verve from the piano. Elements from the first two movements recur, e.g., syncopations, wild string figures and pizzicatos. A bold cello solo ultimately gives the nod to the piano's bubbling and upbeat piano glissando that comprises the movement's coda.

## CHARLES IVES

(1874–1954)

### *Largo for Violin, Clarinet and Piano (1901)*

Often described as a "weekend composer" (but emphatically not an amateur), Ives' day-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 his Transcendentalist forebears Emerson and Thoreau. His music was long misunderstood; many of his works did not receive first performances for many decades after he composed them.

What eventually became his early *Largo for Violin, Clarinet and Piano* began life as a piece for violin and organ solo before the composer decided to incorporate the short work into what is known as a "Pre-First Violin Sonata" that never birthed. 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.

## WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

(1756-1791)

### *Trio for Clarinet, Viola and Piano in E-flat Major, K. 498 "Kegelstatt" (1786)*

The year 1786 was unusually productive for Mozart. All manner of works appeared, including *The Marriage of Figaro* and his Trio for Viola, Clarinet and Piano, "Kegelstatt." It was composed for his friend Anton Stadler, principal clarinetist of Vienna's court orchestra and subsequent dedicatee of the composer's Clarinet Concerto (his last concerto of any sort, written the year of his death) as well as his sublime Clarinet Quintet.

Legend has it that Mozart composed this music while playing skittles, a game redolent of bowling; hence the title "Kegelstatt." Unusually, the Trio opens with an *Andante*, rather than with a traditional fast movement. Piano and viola open the movement with an emphatic flourish after which the clarinet restates the main theme. Throughout the movement Mozart varies the tone color possibilities of the three instruments to maintain a sense of renewal and freshness. The second theme is essentially the last five notes of the primary motive. Though the development section is on the short side, Mozart continues varying the material throughout the recapitulation and coda.

A *Menuetto* follows, here too breaking with a tradition that generally valued grace and elegance over deeper emotion. It begins cheerfully enough, yet soon shows the composer investing the music with bold and sudden dynamic contrasts that at times seem to prefigure the assertiveness of Beethoven. The central Trio is a bit of an oddity. Introduced briefly by a legato phrase from the clarinet, the viola counters with a shuddering series of ardent triplets that creates a sense of conflict among the instruments. The piano largely provides a steady rhythmic underpinning.

The concluding Rondo begins with a lovely song-like theme, a variant on the main theme from the first movement. Among the intervening episodes between repeats of the "A" section, an excursion into the minor and cagily led by the dark-toned viola provides a strong counterpoise to the prevailingly good spirits of this enchanting movement.

## ELLIOTT CARTER

(1908-2012)

### *Elegy (1943)*

Until his recent death Elliott Carter remained an active composer of extraordinary achievement and complexity. Much of the music he wrote in the past half-century makes considerable demands upon performers and listeners because of its multi-layered textures and rhythms. Yet earlier in his career he penned scores with a recognizably American "sound," resonating to the shared musical language of such colleagues as Copland and Harris, with a nod to the acerbic sonorities of Stravinsky. An appealing undercurrent of lyricism informs his music from the 1930s and '40s.

Though Carter eventually disavowed much of his pre-World War II music, the *Elegy* has survived despite the composer's second thoughts. The short but touching work went through several transformations including its original deployment of cello and piano though it works equally well in a string orchestra arrangement dating from 1946. A slow, pensive opening demonstrates independence of individual "voices" or melodic lines, imparting the kind of conversational interplay associated with chamber music. The *Elegy's* main theme has a distinctive aspirational feeling encouraged by the inexorable power of a rising fourth. The piece is firmly rooted in tonality; after building to climax, it ends quietly and with serene consonance. In its resonant emotionality and conservative harmony, the *Elegy* reveals an aspect of Carter rarely encountered in his later works.

## ROBERT SCHUMANN

(1810–1856)

### *Quartet for Piano and Strings in E-flat Major, Op. 47 (1842)*

In 1842 Robert Schumann narrowed his compositional focus on chamber music, producing his three string quartets followed by the simultaneous composition of two of his finest works in any genre: the Op. 44 Piano Quintet and the Quartet for Piano and Strings in E-flat Major, Op. 47. Both works share the same home key, yet they are strikingly different in their emotional worlds. The Quintet—unquestionably his most popular chamber work—revels in big-hearted, buoyant and energetic gestures. Its main protagonist is the piano. The Piano Quartet, less exuberant, delves more deeply into pathos.

Schumann had lofty aspirations for a career as a virtuoso until dashed by injury to his right hand more than a decade earlier. To compensate he took up the cello and though he never became a virtuoso he understood its potentialities quite well. He composed the Piano Quartet for a fine amateur cellist, Count Matavei Wielhorsky. Schumann obviously thought highly of the Count's prowess on the cello; how else to explain the difficulty of the cello part?

The first movement, *Sostenuto assai—Allegro ma non troppo* begins with a slow expansive introduction, which not only fulfills its ostensible purpose of setting the stage but actually reappears later to announce the arrival of the development section. In the "first" introduction, Schumann presents the main theme as a somber and emotionally expectant gesture that quickly accelerates in tempo to launch the *Allegro ma non troppo*. As a nod to the cellist, he proffers a third version—a bright and felicitous variant that energizes the remainder of the movement. The development brings with it a great increase in sheer volume and feverish energy before rushing into the recapitulation.

Finally, Schumann adds a coda that once again turns the spotlight on the cello, which enjoys the privilege of presenting a brand new theme before the movement ends with a restatement of the original thematic material.

A brief skittish *Scherzo* in minor mode follows, filled with nervous energy barely held in check. Somewhat unusually two distinct Trios are housed within the *Scherzo*. The first of these episodes pits a lyrical tune against fast-paced fragments. In the second Trio the piano and strings present a series of rich chords intermixed with snippets from the *Scherzo* proper, i.e., the "A" part of the movement.

The *Andante cantabile* is clearly the heart of the Quartet, fully expressing the quality of yearning ("Sensucht" to early German Romantics). The main theater of action involves a duet between the cello and violin—dare we say the personas of Robert and Clara? The upwardly aspiring nature of the main theme touches deeply as it approaches but never crosses the line from sentiment to sentimentality. In the middle of the movement Schumann inserts a somber aside during which the cello's C-string is actually lowered to B-flat, allowing that new lower tone to serve as a pedal point (Schumann knew his Bach organ music). Above this long-sustained B-flat the other instruments weave a series of ethereal scales often moving in opposite directions from one another.

The *Finale: Vivace* leaps forward with an invigorating motive that sweeps aside the melancholy beauty of the *Andante cantabile*. Relating again to his study of and love for Bach the music herein abounds with felicitous counterpoint balanced by post-Baroque homophonic textures. Schumann's three-note theme in the *Finale* is a shortened version of the four-note theme that permeates the opening movement.

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*Program Notes by Steven Lowe*

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