

# SUMMER FESTIVAL

MONDAY, JULY 8, 2013

8:00 PM

SEATTLE  
CHAMBER  
MUSIC  
SOCIETY

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## PROGRAM

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LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

*Ten Variations on 'Ich bin der Schneider Kakadu' for Piano Trio, Op.121a*

**Andrew Wan** violin / **Bion Tsang** cello / **Anton Nel** piano

LAWRENCE DILLON

*Sanctuary*

Domed and Steepled Solitude

Winged Sandals

Scents and Recollection

A Reliable Pulse

**Jeffrey Fair** horn / **Nurit Bar-Josef** violin / **James Ehnes** violin / **Rebecca Albers** viola /

**Julie Albers** cello / **Jordan Anderson** bass / **Andrew Russo** piano

WORLD PREMIERE COMMISSIONED BY SCMS COMMISSIONING CLUB

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## INTERMISSION

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WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

*Divertimento for String Trio in E-flat Major, K. 563*

Allegro

Adagio

Menuetto: Allegretto

Andante

Menuetto: Allegretto

Allegro

**Augustin Hadelich** violin / **Cynthia Phelps** viola / **Ronald Thomas** cello

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## LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

(1770–1827)

*Ten Variations on 'Ich bin der Schneider Kakadu' ("I am the tailor Cockatoo") for Piano Trio, Op.121a (ca. 1803; revised 1816; published 1824)*

Don't be misled by the high opus number assigned to Beethoven's Ten Variations on 'Ich bin der Schneider Kakadu' for Piano Trio. In common with several others of his early works this Trio found its way into print only after Beethoven had become famous, and therefore a money-maker for publishers. Though he wrote a preliminary version of the Trio in 1803, he revisited it in 1816 by which time he had already composed his Op. 102 Sonatas for Cello and Piano, often considered as the launching pad for his late period music. The eminent Beethoven scholar Lewis Lockwood has argued that the opening Introduction and the concluding *Allegretto* variation probably date from 1816.

The variation theme came courtesy of a popular ditty from Wenzel Müller's comic opera *Die Schwestern von Prag* ("The Sisters of Prague"), which had premiered in Vienna in 1794. As lighthearted as the theme is *per se*, the lengthy Introduction in G minor sets an unexpectedly serious mood from the very first chord played by the ensemble, followed by a slow, sinuous and ominous theme with equally dark thrusting gestures dotting the landscape. For much of the time the piano urges the music forward while the violin and cello exchange anxious phrases. Expectant silences heighten the feeling of latent threat. When the actual "Kakadu" theme emerges from the piano in the first variation, the clunky G-Major tune comically upsets expectations because of its quirky lightness. The second variation finds the violin weaving a bustling version of the theme over the piano. In Variation No. 3 the cello offers its own highly decorated contribution over a reticent accompaniment from the piano.

It is the piano that initiates Variation No. 4 but soon serves a subservient role to the strings. All three participants engage in the light and deft canon that constitutes Variation No. 5. Beethoven disguises the theme amidst florid passagework from the piano in the Sixth Variation while the two stringed instruments provide spare and sporadic single notes.

In the next segment the piano withdraws entirely while the violin and cello spin a canon. No.8 proceeds as a sequence of detached staccato figures. Returning to a more serious mien the ensuing *Adagio espressivo* ninth variation presents another canonic episode based on an augmented statement of the theme.

No. 10 is a somewhat longer variant in which the piano plays the theme in triplets while the strings basically provide a supportive accompaniment; the mood here returns to the jesting character of the Müller's tune. The *Allegretto*—recalling its late genesis—serves as an extended finale opened by engaging counterpoint between violin and cello balanced by the pianist's subsidiary role. A virtuoso coda brings the three instruments to equal prominence.

## LAWRENCE DILLON

(B. 1959)

### *Sanctuary*

Lawrence Dillon is an American composer (b. Summit, New Jersey) whose musical career has blossomed despite a serious childhood bout of chicken pox that reduced his hearing by 50%. Inspired and motivated by his many siblings' piano lessons, he took on the challenge of studying piano at 7 years and quickly developed the practice of writing new music on a weekly basis. In 1985, he became the youngest composer to earn a doctorate at The Juilliard School. His mentors included such luminaries in the pantheon of American composers and pedagogues as Vincent Persichetti, Milton Babbitt, Elliott Carter, Roger Sessions, and David Diamond (long-time honorary composer in residence for Seattle Symphony).

Along with several other prominent American composers of the past half-century, Dillon has breathed new life into tonally based music often characterized as possessing a penchant for engaging lyricism animated by propulsive rhythm.

The composer kindly provided the following personal and insightful commentary on the ideas and feelings that generated tonight's work, *Sanctuary*:

“A peaceful refuge, a shelter, a sanctuary: all creatures require an opportunity to retreat from oppressive forces, to find respite from the burdens and demands of life. *Sanctuary* explores four of these havens in four movements, all connecting the world in which we live to the world we imagine.

“When Mark Twain first visited New York City, he spoke of a “domed and steepled solitude, where a stranger is lonely among a million of his race.” The first movement of *Sanctuary* pits overwhelming clamor against quiet introspection—the initial tempo indication is *Tranquillo vs. furioso* – gradually subsiding into gently rolling harmonies.

“Many of us have felt the seductive nature of speed (the state of motion, not the amphetamine), whether found in running shoes, in the air, in amusement park rides, on the highways. Leaving the rest of the world in a blur enables us to find, if only briefly, a sense of repose and wonder. The second movement celebrates speed in a scherzo named for the conveyance favored by Mercury, the swift messenger god of ancient Rome.

“*Scents and Recollection* traces the path from sensory experience to memory, so lovingly described by Proust in *À la recherche du temps perdu*. A single note blossoms into a many-voiced aria from a bygone era, leading to the peaceful, rocking harmonies that concluded the first movement.

“All life ends, but life itself endures. As we ponder our individual fates, we can’t help but seek reassurance in the consistent rhythms coursing through the vessels of our mortality. *A Reliable Pulse* finds refuge from darkest fears in the steady but fragile patterns of life: a beating heart, an exuberant dance.”

## WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

(1756-1791)

### *Divertimento for String Trio in E-flat Major, K. 563 (1788)*

In the 18th-century the term divertimento suggested light music designed for background ambience at social gatherings. Mozart wrote many such works—often with

alternative titles such as cassation and serenade. Yet he lavished great skill on these works, often including movements of both complexity and emotional depth that transcend their immediate function as “diversions.” Such is the case with his Divertimento for String Trio, K. 563, which Mozart composed as a gift of gratitude for fellow Freemason Johann Michael Puchberg (1741–1822). Puchberg, who ironically died in poverty after being well situated financially during Mozart’s years in Vienna, had been generous in lending the composer money on several occasions to help pay off the composer’s gambling and other debts.

The Classical divertimento was a hybrid creature that adopted the multiple-movement format of a Baroque suite while incorporating the sonata-allegro form one associates with symphonies and string quartets, especially in first movements. The inner movements typically were based on dance à la aforementioned Baroque suite. The confluence of these elements often resulted in works balancing serious intellectual/emotional features with the unbuttoned mood of country and courtly dances.

Such is the case with the K. 563 Divertimento, one of his finest chamber works. The opening *Allegro* promises good cheer readily apparent in the singing main theme enhanced by optimistic rising and falling scales. A second lyrical theme announced by the violin and cello reinforces the impression. Yet the development section introduces a palpable mood shift from unforced joy to anxiety, leaving the listener with a sense of ambivalence—perhaps Mozart’s intention. Naturally the recapitulation restores the light mood of the exposition.

The following *Adagio* is the longest of the six movements. The opening rising arpeggios in the major mode promise restorative optimism. Yet as the music progresses one cannot help but sense a wistful and at times sad mindset. As if to reinforce the movement’s dual nature the rising theme sinks into the minor to darken the mood beyond mere sadness. Dramatic octave jumps in the violin part over chords from the viola and cello seem to illustrate the implicit uncertainty of the mood as do the occasional deceptive cadences where the music seems ready to end definitively but hover on a chord lacking resolution. The first *Menuetto: Allegretto* brings cloudless skies and a rustic dance led by an energetic tune from the violin

punctuated by chordal thrusts from the viola and cello.

Another rustic tune initiates the *Andante*, gently prodded by a low register Baroque-like walking bass from the cello. What follows is a set of four distinctive and highly individualized variations. The theme's inherent simplicity and innocence undergoes dramatic transformation and deepening of emotion. The last variation posits a slow-paced elaboration of the countrified tune played by the viola against a flurry of contrapuntal activity from the other instruments. A short coda returns to the easygoing mood of the opening of the movement.

The second *Menuetto: Allegretto* reflects nothing less than a fresh rustic dance, an effect enhanced by recreating a musical figure long used to suggest hunting horns. The viola leads the first Trio in a

stomping country-dance tune; it is followed by a second Trio wherein the violin hogs the melody to itself. After repeating the "A" section, the movement ends with a brief coda.

The concluding *Allegro* is a Rondo-Sonata construction in which the rondo aspect (repeated "A" main theme interspersed with contrasting episodes) incorporates a highly contrapuntal development section typical of a sonata-allegro movement. The music opens with an irresistibly sweet theme rendered with artful rusticity. As the theme unfolds Mozart introduces an oft-repeated drum-like figure that animates the music. During the coda this figure brings the piece to a rousing energetic close.

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*Program Notes by Steven Lowe*

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