

July 12, 2011
Program Notes

by Will Hertz

Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967)
Intermezzo for String Trio

The Hungarian Zoltán Kodály was a man of many parts. In addition to composing, he was a professor and then assistant director at the Budapest Academy of Music. He was a music critic for newspapers and journals in Hungary and the author of numerous scholarly writings on central European folk music. And he was an internationally recognized music educator, the father of the “Kodály method” for developing musical literacy in schoolchildren.

Perhaps most important, he was a leading ethno-musicologist, working with Béla Bartók to free Hungarian folk music from the gypsy encrustations heard in European cafes. Over a 10-year period, starting in 1905, Kodály and Bartók spent their summers touring Hungarian villages and recording folk songs on wax cylinders or jotting them down in notation as the villagers sang them. This pioneer effort resulted in a series of folk-song collections and studies, which are classics in their field.

In his composing, Kodály, like Bartók, was committed to furthering the musical heritage of his country, drawing his subjects from Hungarian literature and folklore and seasoning his music with the pungent vigor of Hungarian peasant idioms. In that regard, Bartók paid his friend the highest praise: “If I were asked,” he wrote, “in whose music the spirit of Hungary is most perfectly embodied, I would reply, in Kodály’s. His music is a profession of faith in the spirit of Hungary. His work as a composer is entirely rooted in the soil of Hungarian folk music.”

But, unlike Bartók, Kodály wrote mainly in a late romantic style, conservative in its harmonic language and easily accessible to modern audiences. Several of his nationalist compositions have won a permanent place in the international repertoire – his national opera *Hary Janos* and the orchestral suite drawn from it, the *Peacock* Variations, the *Galanta* and *Marosszék Dances* for orchestra, and the *Psalmus Hungaricus* for chorus and orchestra.

In contrast to these masterworks of his maturity, the *Intermezzo* dates from 1905 immediately after his graduation from the Budapest Academy of Music and just before his first field research with Bartók. The principal themes, however, reflect his early interest in Hungarian folk melody.

In a simple A-B-A form, the five-minute work has the character of a relaxed serenade. The theme of the A section is a gracious strain presented by the violin over a moving pizzicato suggesting a zither, a plucked string instrument common in central Europe. The B section is more lyrical, rising to an emotional climax. In the words of an anonymous English writer, “the *Intermezzo* sounds rather like Dvorák with a slight Hungarian accent.”

Béla Bartók (1881-1945)
Ten Violin Duets

Bartók turned again and again during his life to writing music for children. In virtually all of this music, he blended the fanciful world of children, his strong interest in musical pedagogy, and his extensive scholarship in folk music.

The result was a unique body of children’s works rooted in folk idioms, including: *For Children* (1908-1909), four volumes of 85 piano pieces based on Hungarian and Slovakian folk songs; *Nine Small Piano Pieces* (1926); *Mikrokosmos* (1928-1939) six volumes of 183 piano pieces of graded difficulty; and *Twenty-seven Two and Three-part Choruses for Children’s and Female Choruses* (1935).

In 1931, Erich Doflein, a progressive violin teacher at the Freiburg School of Music, asked Bartók's help, as well as that of Paul Hindemith and Carl Orff, in preparing a new violin method for his students. In the case of Bartók, he asked for permission to make violin transcriptions of several pieces in *For Children*, or alternatively for the composer to make such transcriptions himself. Instead, Bartók chose to write entirely new pieces specifically for the violin, and he entered into a long correspondence with Doflein on his pupils' needs.

The result was 44 duets for unaccompanied violins, groups in four volumes of graduated difficulty. In 1936, Bartók transcribed five of the duets for piano and published them as *Petite Suite*. The ten violin duets that we hear this evening are taken from the initial 1931 collection.

In a note for the premiere of the duets, Bartók wrote that his purpose was "to provide works suitable for performance by students during the first few years of study, works in which a natural simplicity is combined with the melodic and rhythmic characteristics of folk music." A short time later he wrote a friend that in the duets he had incorporated "Hungarian, Slovak, Rumanian, Serbian, Ruthenian and even Arab melodies." Still others are children's game or play songs.

Bartók's statements notwithstanding, these duets are not simply transcriptions, but are as much products of Bartók's creative use of folk materials as is his more serious music.

Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

Romance Oubliée (Forgotten Romance)

In 1881, Liszt published this piece simultaneously in four versions – for piano solo, violin and piano, viola and piano, and cello and piano. The viola and piano version, which we hear tonight, was the original format as explained in the following note from the publisher:

"A few years before his death Liszt was staying as a guest of Cardinal Hohenlohe's at the Villa d'Este at Tivoli near Rome. Here the Master was sent, by the music-dealer Simon of Hanover, a leaf taken from an album on which was a piece of music written in Liszt's hand in his youthful years, with a request to be allowed to publish it. The reply to this request was Liszt's paraphrase of the album-leaf in the form of the composition which he entitled "Romance Oubliée", written for Viola alta [that is, a super-sized viola] and dedicated to the viola virtuoso Hermann Ritter."

Ritter gave many performances of the piece, and arranged for its publication for the traditional viola. The result is a showcase for the viola's dynamic and emotional range with the piano mainly in accompaniment. The viola begins the piece alone, dominates the texture, and builds it to a passionate climax. At the end, Ritter adds an extended passage of repeated arpeggios echoing Liszt's arrangement for viola and piano in Berlioz's *Harold in Italy*.

Continued on next page

Béla Bartók

Rhapsody No. 1 for Violin and Piano

Over the years Bartók extended his interest in Hungarian folk music to Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria – and even to Algeria. As he later recalled in a lecture at Harvard, he incorporated into his own compositional style “this newly-covered musical rural material of incomparable beauty and perfection.” He cited scores of ways this material exerted its influence on his music, tonally, rhythmically, and even structurally.

Generally speaking, Bartók used these folk influences in two ways. In some cases, he simply provided settings of existing folk music for performance by western singers or on western instruments. This category included, for example, the *Six Romanian Folk Dances* of 1915, essentially folk tunes set for the piano simple enough for competent children to play. In other cases, he produced completely original compositions exploring and exploiting folk melodic and rhythmic elements and requiring advanced musical skills for realization.

The Rhapsody we hear this evening falls into the second category. It was one of two rhapsodies composed in 1928 for friends who were concert violinists – the first for Joseph Szigeti, well known in the United States, and the second for Zoltán Székely, a mainly Hungarian musician. Bartók and Szigeti became frequent concert and recording colleagues, and for them and clarinetist Benny Goodman Bartók composed his popular concert piece *Contrasts*.

The two Rhapsodies won immediate attention and were both issued in other instrumental combinations. Thus the first Rhapsody, initially for violin and piano, is often heard for violin and orchestra and for cello and piano. However, the violin-and-piano version is still the most frequently performed.

The first Rhapsody uses mostly folk elements from Transylvania, an historic region in central Romania, with additional tunes from Hungary and Ruthenia, a border region partly in Hungary, Slovakia and the Ukraine. However, these melodies are extensively ornamented and elaborated beyond the capacity of most village musicians.

The structure is built on the *csárdás*, a term derived from the Hungarian for “country tavern”. Although originating in Hungary, the form is common throughout central Europe and was popularized in Western Europe by gypsy musicians. Liszt used the form in several of his *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, as did Brahms in several of his *Hungarian Dances* and Tchaikovsky in the ballet *Swan Lake*.

The *csárdás* has two distinct movements: a slow introduction, called the *lassu*, and a swift wild dance, called the *friss*. In this case, the *lassu* features a heavily accented rhythm and a melody initially based on the ascending scale of the medieval Lydian mode. A second section is dominated by the characteristic short-long rhythm familiar in Hungarian folk music. The section ends with the return of the first material and a closing reference to the second.

The *friss*, after the a brief introduction, features a melody that may remind you of the Shaker melody Aaron Copland used in *Appalachian Spring*. The second section, with variations in speed, generates greater excitement, the metronome marks increasing from 100 to 120, 152, 160, 168 and 200. Bartók provided alternative endings: one abruptly assuming the pace and theme of the *lassu*, and the other reversing the acceleration, bringing back the *friss* theme, and closing with a brisk coda. Bartók always played the second.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Piano Quartet No. 1 in G Minor, Op. 25

One of Brahms’s idiosyncrasies as a composer was his tendency to produce works in pairs. Thus, as a young man he wrote in succession two serenades, two piano quartets and two sextets. In later years, he coupled two symphonies, two string quartets, two concert overtures, two chamber works for the clarinet and two clarinet sonatas. In each instance, the pair constituted either Brahms’s only works in the form or medium, or his initial ventures. Apparently, the problems entailed in breaking new ground stimulated his imagination to the point that it produced enough material for two compositions.

In 1861-62, Brahms composed two piano quartets – in G minor, Opus 25, and in A major, Opus 26 – while he was still living in his home city of Hamburg. In his late 20s, he was in the process of learning his trade, and he still felt most comfortable with chamber-music groupings involving his own instrument, the piano.

The G Minor Quartet, which we hear this evening, received its first performance in Hamburg in November 1861, with Brahms's friend Clara Schumann playing the piano part. Hamburg was then a cultural backwater, and the work received little attention elsewhere. A year later, however, the quartet was instrumental in what was perhaps Brahms's most important career decision.

In September 1862, Brahms visited Vienna to assess the advisability of his moving permanently to the music capital of Europe. He showed the two piano quartets to Josef Hellmesberger, head of Vienna's leading string quartet, who arranged public performances of the works with Brahms at the piano. The resulting favorable reception helped persuade Brahms to make the jump from Hamburg to Vienna the following year.

The G Minor Quartet is one of Brahms's most infectious compositions, combining the exuberance and vigor of youth with a growing mastery of form and thematic development. The first movement has no less than eight themes, some in the tonic G minor and some in contrasting D major and D minor, but all linked by a complex web of shared motives and rhythmic elements. After the themes are presented, Brahms restates the opening theme in a new dress, as a dialogue between the piano and strings.

With so much material, Brahms avoids diffuseness by focusing the development on the opening theme. Perhaps the most inventive passage comes in the recapitulation when a particularly vigorous theme, heard initially in a joyful D major, is now repeated in a somber G minor. The movement is then played out in the minor mode, giving the music an over-all tragic cast.

The second movement bears the title "Intermezzo", the first time Brahms used that term. Organized like a scherzo with a main section, a trio and the main section repeated, the music is played with mutes and in a flowing 9/8 rhythm. The result is the first of those "sweet-sad" interludes that Brahms was often to use as a respite between weightier movements.

The slow movement is one of startling contrasts. After a long relaxed opening in E flat, there is a sudden change of mood, and we are caught up in a rhythmic march (though in triple meter) in C major. The march, first played *pianissimo*, rises to a stirring climax *fortissimo*. The first section returns in the secondary key, and when it regains its original key it is so changed in texture that there is no sense of anticlimax.

Brahms titled the fourth movement *Rondo alla Zingarese* or "Gypsy Rondo" in the mistaken belief that he had written in an authentic Hungarian folk style. In 1853, he had toured Europe as piano accompanist for Eduard Remenyi, a Hungarian violinist, and had developed an affection for what he thought was Hungarian music. What he had heard, however, was a popularized version of Hungarian music then being offered by traveling gypsy bands without roots in Magyar musical tradition.

As a result, Brahms, like Liszt and other composers, confused gypsy music with true Hungarian music, and erroneously used the terms "Hungarian" and "gypsy" interchangeably. It was not until early in the 20th century that Bartók and Kodály, on the basis of field research, documented the substantial differences between the gypsy style favored by Brahms and the authentic Magyar idiom.

For sheer excitement, the "Gypsy Rondo" has few equals in chamber music. Following the gypsy convention, the movement consists of a feverish sequence of separate sections, in contrasting rhythms and moods. There is then a cadenza in which the four instruments rhapsodize over the melodies. The work ends with a headlong rush, marked by the composer *molto presto*, the only such designation in the chamber-music repertory.

A final note. In 1937, Arnold Schoenberg, an admirer of Brahms, brilliantly arranged the piano quartet for full orchestra, and this version is occasionally heard in the concert hall. In the "Gypsy Rondo", he embellished the uproarious closing measures with trombone *glissandi* and a large percussion battery including xylophone and glockenspiel! This treatment sounds entirely appropriate.

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July 19, 2011
Program Notes

by Will Hertz

George Crumb (1927-)
Vox Balaenae (Voice of the Whale)

George Crumb is one of the most respected of the generation of American composers who reached maturity in the third quarter of the 20th century. He has received grants and awards from the Fromm, Coolidge, Guggenheim, Koussevitzky and Rockefeller Foundations and from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 1968 he won the Pulitzer Prize for *Echoes of Time and the River*, an orchestral work, and in 1971, the International Rostrum of Composers (UNESCO) Award for his entire body of compositions.

Crumb was born in Charleston, West Virginia, into a musical family – his father was a band leader, his mother, a cellist, and his brother, a flutist. He studied at the Mason College of Music in Charleston, and earned advanced degrees at the Universities of Illinois and Michigan. Teaching appointments followed at the Universities of Colorado and Pennsylvania. For many years he has been composer in residence at Pennsylvania.

Crumb is best known for his settings of verse by the Spanish poet Federico Garcia Lorca, particularly in his *Ancient Voices of Children* and four books of *Madrigals*. In addition, he has composed a large number of instrumental works, using unusual instruments or combinations of instruments, and producing an enormous range of instrumental effects and sonorities. He has also used such unconventional means as electronic amplification, tuned water glasses, quotations from other composers and masks for the performers.

Vox Balaenae, composed in 1971, was inspired by a tape recording by a marine scientist of the sounds emitted by the humpback whale. Crumb was struck not only by the quality of the sounds themselves but also by the natural phenomenon of the huge animals singing as they swam through the ocean. Music might be defined as a system of proportions in the service of a spiritual impulse,” he has written, and this seemed to apply to whales as well as to human beings.

To depict the sounds of the whale and its marine environment, Crumb scored the work for flute, cello and piano, all electronically amplified. He added color by calling on the flutist to sing and play simultaneously, the cellist to tune his or her strings off their normal pitch, the pianist to strum the instrument’s strings *pizzicato*, and the cellist and flutist to strike *crotales* (antique cymbals).

Further, he directed the performers to wear either black half-masks or visor masks. “The masks,” he explained, “by effacing the sense of human projection, are intended to represent symbolically the powerful, impersonal forces of nature, that is to say, nature dehumanized.” To provide a further sense of the whale’s ocean surroundings, he suggested deep blue stage lighting.

Crumb himself has described the music as follows:

“The form of *Voice of the Whale* is a simple three-part design, consisting of a prologue, a set of variations named after the geological eras, and an epilogue.

“The opening vocalise, marked in the score, ‘Wildly fantastic, grotesque,’ is a kind of cadenza for the flutist, who simultaneously plays his or her instrument and sings into it. This combination of instrumental and vocal sound produces an eerie, surreal timbre, not unlike the sounds of the humpbacked whale. The conclusion of the cadenza is announced by a parody of the opening measures of Strauss’s *Also Sprach Zarathustra* [also used in the film *2001*]. The sea theme, marked in the score, ‘Solemn, with calm majesty,’ is presented by the cello in harmonics, accompanied by dark fateful chords of strummed piano strings.

“The following sequence of variations begins with the haunting sea gull cries of the Archeozoic era, marked, ‘Timeless, inchoate,’ and, gradually increasing in intensity, reaches a strident climax in the Cenozoic era, marked, ‘Dramatic, with a feeling of destiny.’ The emergence of man in the Cenozoic era is symbolized by a restatement of the *Zarathustra* reference.

“The concluding *Sea Nocturne*, marked, ‘Serene, pure, transfigured,’ is an elaboration of the sea theme. The piece is couched in the luminous tonality of B major, and there are shimmering sounds of antique cymbals played alternately by the cellist and flutist. In composing the *Sea Nocturne* I wanted to suggest a larger rhythm of nature and a sense of suspension in time. The concluding gesture of the work is a gradually dying series of repetitions of a ten-note figure. In concert performance the last figure is to be played in pantomime to suggest a diminuendo beyond the threshold of hearing.”

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

String Quartet in E-Flat Major, Op. 74, “Harp”

Like Beethoven’s “Pastorale” Symphony, squeezed between the Fifth and Seventh Symphonies, the “Harp” String Quartet is essentially a lyric, meditative work nesting among the giants of his middle and late quartets. In fact, its relaxed character seems an incongruity since it was written in 1809, the year Napoleon’s troops bombarded and then occupied Vienna.

Napoleon and his troops reached Vienna early in May, and on the night of May 11-12 the city suffered heavy bombardment. According to Beethoven’s friend Ferdinand Ries, the composer sought refuge in his brother Carl’s cellar, covering his head with a pillow to protect his weak hearing. Vienna was occupied the next day, and in the ensuing weeks its citizens suffered great hardships – rising prices, shortages of food and levies on their purse. Beethoven was despondent. His sources of income were shut off, his patrons had fled, and his favorite promenades in the public parks were now military camps.

The composer finally took refuge at the watering place of Baden, 15 miles from Vienna, where this quartet was written. The work did not come easily. According to his letters, Beethoven found it difficult to compose under wartime conditions, and he devoted 30 notebook pages to working out the quartet’s problems. Under these circumstances Beethoven lacked the incentive to break new ground or scale new heights, and this mainly easy-going quartet was the result. Fortunately for us, the mood did not last long. His next work was the “Emperor” Concerto.

The “Harp” Quartet takes its nickname from two passages in the first movement in which pizzicato arpeggios ascend through the lower three instruments. One passage leads from the development into the recapitulation, and the other underpins part of the coda. Of greater musical interest are the movement’s slow, dreamy, gently dissonant introduction, and the virtuosic passage for the first violin that overlays the second “harping” episode in the coda. Other than these features, the movement is a fairly straightforward Beethoven excursion in sonata form.

The music takes on added expressiveness in the slow movement, a beautiful *adagio*, whose spacious melodies are subjected to exquisite ornamentation. The movement is in abbreviated rondo form (A-B-A-C-A), but the sections are more complementary than contrasting. The overall impression remains one of restraint rather than tension.

With the scherzo, the pendulum swings for the moment to the other extreme. Marked *presto*, the music is propelled by a strong, vigorous rhythmic drive and is full of hammering figures and breathless scale passages. The movement bears a strong resemblance to the scherzo of the Fifth Symphony, with its obsessive use of a similar C-minor knocking motif and its long coda leading without pause to the finale.

However, instead of a triumphant peroration as in the Fifth Symphony, Beethoven gives us an unwinding theme with variations, a rare form for a Beethoven finale. The theme is graceful enough, and the six variations pursue it through varied rhythmic mazes. Beethoven adds to the interest by making the odd-numbered variations strong and

active and the even numbered ones gentle and lyrical. The concluding coda steps up the pace, leading to a brilliant conclusion based on the third variation.

Rebecca Clarke (1886-1976)

Piano Trio

British-born Rebecca Clarke was a pioneer woman composer at a time of considerable prejudice against women composers. Although trained in England, she achieved her first success in the United States after World War I. At the start of World War II, she settled in the United States, won temporary and grudging appreciation as a composer, and died largely unappreciated in New York City.

Clarke was the daughter of an American businessman assigned to Britain and a woman of German background. She initially attended the Royal Academy of Music in London, but, according to a possibly apocryphal story, she was withdrawn by her parents when, at the age of 17, she received a marriage proposal from her harmony professor. She then enrolled in the competing Royal College of Music, where she studied composition with C. V. Stanford, a prominent British composer and teacher.

Stanford persuaded her to take up the viola with Lionel Tertis, Britain's leading violist, as her instructor. She was one of the College's first women students, and after graduation she played the viola as a soloist and orchestral musician and in three of the earliest women's chamber-music groups.

In 1909, Clarke began composing music for anyone who would listen. Her first major success came in 1918 when she successfully presented her viola piece *Morpheus* in New York's Carnegie Hall. To facilitate its commercial sale, however, the publisher persuaded her to issue it under the male pseudonym "Anthony Trent".

The following year, as Anthony Trent, she entered her Viola Sonata in the Berkshire Musical Festival competition sponsored by Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge. With a total of 73 entries, the judges were evenly divided between Ernest Bloch's viola sonata and Clarke's, and Coolidge gave her deciding vote to Bloch.

In 1921, "Anthony Trent" again entered the Berkshire competition with her Piano Trio, the work we hear this evening, and was again the runner-up. Based on that showing, Coolidge commissioned Clarke to compose under her own name a Rhapsody for Cello and Piano for the non-competitive side of the 1923 Berkshire Festival. But eventually, given the continuing disinterest of publishers, Clarke's output of compositions declined, and with the exception of one song, she composed nothing in the last 35 years of her life.

More recently, a growing interest in women composers has generated a revival of interest in her music. This revival has been furthered by two specific events. The first was a celebration of Clarke's 90th birthday in 1976 by a small group of enthusiasts, triggering the publication of her unpublished manuscripts. The second was the organization in 2000 of the Rebecca Clarke Society to support the performance, publication and recording of her music.

Composed at a time when Arnold Schoenberg was promoting atonality, Clarke's Piano Trio is conservative in its harmonic language, but it is strikingly original in the ways in which she uses her musical material.

The trio is in three movements, linked together by a motto theme heard at the outset and repeated in the ensuing movements in dramatically varied forms. The first movement, *moderato ma appassionato*, opens with the piano's *fortissimo* announcement of the motto theme - six 16th notes on B-flat leading to a C and a final B-flat - over a sustained chord in the strings. The motto theme is then picked up by the cello and the violin and brought to a climax.

A trumpet-like phrase, *pianissimo*, in the piano ushers in the sharply contrasting second theme, marked *mysterioso*. A long development follows, based mainly on the motto theme but with the second theme joining in at the climax in massive chords. The coda, perhaps the movement's most striking passage, starts with a slow version of the motto theme played by the cello and piano canonically, that is with overlapping entrances.

In the second movement, *poco lento e molto semplice*, the strings are muted throughout. The violin presents the first theme accompanied by a single C struck repeatedly by the piano. Echoes of the motto theme are blended in, but played at half speed. A string passage in double stops below piano arpeggios leads to the second theme, a folk-like melody on the piano over a rocking accompaniment in the strings, another variant of the motto theme. The movement dies away with the violin recalling its opening measures.

The third movement, *allegro vigoroso*, begins with the piano hammering out the first theme over pizzicato chords in the strings. The heavily accented ascending and descending strain becomes increasingly wild. This is followed by a quieter passage based on the second theme of the first movement but with different harmonies and character and with echoes of the slow movement. After the development, based mainly on the movement's first theme, the motto theme makes a final appearance, now slow and elegiac, and the trio ends with a short and animated coda.

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July 26, 2011

Program Notes

by Will Hertz

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

Piano Quartet Movement in A Minor (1876)

Mahler is associated in our minds with massive symphonies and vocal music with a large orchestral accompaniment. His initial musical training, however, was as a pianist, and he gave his first public concert as a pianist at the age of 10. Sent to the Vienna Conservatory at 15, he was still considered a pianist, winning several student competitions at the keyboard. It was not until he was 17 that he abandoned the idea of being a concert pianist in favor of composition.

Mahler's earliest compositions, consequently, were chamber music involving the piano. Thus, while still a teenage student at the Vienna Conservatory, he produced a violin and piano sonata, a piano quintet (piano plus four string instruments), the scherzo for another piano quintet, and the first movement of a piano quartet (piano plus three strings). The sonata and piano quintet were subsequently lost, but the manuscript of the piano quartet movement somehow survived, and we hear it this evening.

After the composition of the piano quartet movement in 1876, there was no public performance of the work until 1962 when it was broadcast over New York City radio station WBAI. It turned out to be a warm and melodious piece, in the mid-19th century romantic tradition of Mendelssohn or Schumann, composers whom Mahler was studying at the Conservatory at the time of its composition. The movement was subsequently published, and it received its first concert performance in London in 1968. It is now an occasional piece in the chamber-music repertory.

Following 19th century models, the movement is cast in traditional sonata form, with the presentation of two main themes followed by their development and restatement. The piano states the first theme, marked by a three-note pattern encompassing an upward jump of a sixth with a return to the fifth. The strings pick up and extend this pattern, which then dominates the movement. The second theme, presented by the strings, complements the pattern with a rapid descending series of notes.

The development combines the two themes, rising to a climax of some intensity. Perhaps the movement's most imaginative passage is the return of the first theme, now in a subdued, even mysterious mood. Near the end, a cadenza for the first violin leads to a quiet conclusion.

About The Debussy and Mahler Arrangements

The concert continues with two orchestral works performed by reduced chamber-sized groups in arrangements inspired by composer Arnold Schoenberg. Following World War I, Schoenberg, with his disciples Alban Berg and Anton Webern, established the Vienna "Society for Private Musical Performances" (*Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen*) to present music by contemporary composers to the city's conservative musical public. The society had to go out of business in December 1921, due to the postwar inflation in Austria, but in its four seasons it gave 353 performances of 154 works in a total of 117 concerts.

The Society's range of music was wide – the "allowable" composers were not limited to the Schoenberg circle but drawn from all those who had "a real face or name." The programs included works by Stravinsky, Bartok, Debussy, Ravel, Scriabin, and Reger as well as Webern and Berg. During the Society's first two years, in fact, Schoenberg, the father of atonality, did not allow any of his own music to be performed.

Concerts were normally given at the rate of one per week. The players were chosen from among the most gifted young musicians available, and each work was rehearsed intensively, either under Schoenberg himself or by a

“Performance Director” appointed by him. The primary objective was audience education, with clarity and comprehensibility of the performance the overriding aim. No applause was permitted, and complex works were sometimes played a second time at the same concert.

The audience was highly selective — only those who had joined the organization and had been issued photo ID cards were admitted. Such precautions were exercised to exclude ‘sensation-seeking’ members of the Viennese public who would often attend concerts with the intention of whistling derisively at “modern” works. Further, to prevent hostile criticism in the press, a sign was displayed on the door: “Critics are forbidden entry”.

Orchestral music was presented with reduced musical forces to minimize costs and to accommodate the small stage that was available. Schoenberg believed the arrangement of large works for reduced forces made possible “a clarity of presentation and a simplicity of formal enunciation often not possible in a rendition obscured by the richness of orchestration.”

In the Society’s first three seasons, orchestral works were generally performed in piano transcriptions, but in the fourth season performances were offered by a chamber orchestra of up to 16 of Schoenberg’s students. The two arrangements we hear this evening were among the ten manuscripts of such chamber-orchestra arrangements now known to exist. Many of these arrangements, however, were unperformed by the Society because of its abrupt termination midway through the fourth season.

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun

Schoenberg was keenly interested in the music of Debussy – 16 of Debussy’s compositions were included in the Society’s programs. In this case, the arrangement was completed in October 1921, and scheduled for performance in the second half of the season – the half that was canceled. The arranger was Benno Sachs, one of the Society’s rehearsal conductors and its correspondence secretary. Beyond that, little is known about him.

Composed in 1894, the *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* was Debussy’s first full-blown work of musical impressionism. In his effort to coin a distinctly French musical language, he turned to the paintings of the French impressionists — Monet, Manet and Renoir — and to the poetry of the French symbolists -- Verlaine, Baudelaire and Mallarmé. Their works suggested a new type of music in which the emphasis would be on understatement rather than heated emotion, on ambiguity and instrumental colors rather than the formal development of musical ideas.

This one-movement piece was inspired by Mallarmé’s poem, *L’Après-midi d’un Faune*, initially published in 1875 and revised in 1876, which had shocked the literary world with its emphasis on ambiguity, sensuousness and symbolism. Only 116 lines long, it is, in essence, the monologue of a faun, a sensuous half-human creature who could exist only in the imagination of an obscurantist poet. The faun awakens in a sunlit forest and tries to recall an encounter with two beautiful nymphs who had resisted his erotic embraces. But the recollection may have been only a dream and, as the forest grows warm, the faun again drowns off to sleep.

Debussy did not intend his *Prelude* as a synthesis or musical retelling of the poem. While the prominence of the flute clearly represents the piping of the faun, the music, according to the composer, is “a series of scenes against which the desires and dreams of the faun are seen to stir in the afternoon heat.” The work opens with a famous arabesque — Debussy’s term — for flute. This languorous melody is repeated and developed by the other instruments with subtle variations in harmony and tone color. A middle section is a sensuous transformation of the original flute melody. The opening strains return, and the music fades off into thin air.

As written by Debussy, the *Prelude* requires a relatively small orchestra — three flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two harps, tiny antique cymbals and a full body of strings. Sachs scored it for eleven instruments – flute, oboe, clarinet, harmonium, piano, string quintet and antique cymbals.

Gustav Mahler

Symphony No. 4 in G Major

Notwithstanding their 14-year difference in age, Mahler and Schoenberg had been friends and colleagues since the start of the 20th century. In 1899, Mahler, an international figure as a composer and conductor, attended the dress rehearsal of Schoenberg's early masterpiece *Verklarte Nacht*, and became an enthusiastic supporter of Schoenberg's music. They maintained their close relationship even after Schoenberg veered off into atonality, which Mahler never accepted. The friendship was terminated only by Mahler's untimely death in 1911.

It is hardly surprising, then, that Schoenberg turned to the music of his deceased friend for the reduced-force concerts by the Society for Private Musical Performance. In fact, Schoenberg selected three of Mahler's orchestral masterpieces for arrangement. Schoenberg himself handled *Songs of a Wayfarer*, and Webern did *Das Lied von Der Erde*. For Mahler's Fourth Symphony, Schoenberg turned to Erwin Stein, his principal assistant in running the Society.

In the autumn of 1920, Stein transcribed the Fourth Symphony for 15 players and soprano, and conducted its premiere performance at the Society's January 10, 1921, concert. The history of Stein's transcription following that performance is a bit murky. With the termination of the Society that December, Stein apparently lost interest in the reduction process; the parts of his Mahler reduction were lost, and there was no repeat performance of the reduction for nearly 70 years.

Meanwhile, Stein went on to a successful career as a music teacher, conductor and writer on music. In 1924 Schoenberg entrusted him to write the first article, "New Formal Principles", announcing and explaining Schoenberg's revolutionary twelve-tone system. Stein remained in Vienna until Hitler's *anschluss* of Austria in 1938, and he then fled to London where he worked as an influential editor on the music of Mahler, Schoenberg and Benjamin Britten.

Finally, in the summer of 1990, Britten's estate, created following his death in 1976, approached a young American conductor Alexander Platt about reconstructing Stein's lost chamber version of Mahler's Fourth Symphony. Platt had attracted the estate's attention by leading a revival of Britten's neglected opera *Owen Wingrave* at Cambridge University, and had then made his professional debut at Britten's Aldeburgh Festival.

Platt executed the task by using a copy of Mahler's original score, freely annotated in Stein's own hand, which had been preserved in the Arnold Schoenberg Institute's Archives in Los Angeles. Platt's reconstruction of Stein's chamber version was premiered at Wigmore Hall, in London, on November 22, 1993, on what would have been Britten's 80th birthday.

Mahler composed his Fourth Symphony between 1899 and 1901, but it incorporated a song, "Das himmlische Leben (Heaven Joys)", that he had originally written as a free-standing piece in 1892. The song, presenting a child's vision of heaven, appears in various ways in the first three movements, and in the fourth movement, it is sung in its entirety by a solo soprano.

The song is based on a text from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn (The Youth's Magic Horn)*, a collection of German folk poems published between 1805 and 1808. The collection became an important source of folklore in 19th century Germany, and provided a strong sense of unity for a people still divided into separate political entities. Mahler published settings of nine of the songs in 1892 and used themes from the collection in his first four symphonies.

In his Fourth Symphony, Mahler was a masterful and exuberant orchestrator. In addition to the soprano, his score called for four flutes, three oboes, three bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, a battery of percussion and a full orchestral body of strings. Stein's and Platt's final arrangement reduced these forces to the soprano and 12 instrumentalists -- one flute (alternating with the piccolo), one oboe (alternating with the English horn), one clarinet, a harmonium, a piano, two violins, one viola, one cello, one double bass and two percussion players. In tonight's performance, the harmonium part will be played on a keyboard synthesizer.

A performance of the symphony takes about an hour, making it one of Mahler's shorter symphonies. There are four movements, with captions in German rather than traditional Italian which are translated into English in the parentheses below.

The first movement (*moderately, not rushed*) opens with a chirping rhythm seasoned by sleigh bells. This striking instrumental coloring will reappear later in the first movement and again in the fourth movement, unifying the entire symphony. The first movement is in traditional sonata form. The first theme is a lilting melody presented by the violins, and the second a more flowing tune for the cello. The development includes a third strain stated in the original by four flutes in unison over a dark accompaniment by the lower instruments.

The second movement (*leisurely moving, without haste*) features a solo part for a violin whose strings are tuned a tone higher than usual. The violin depicts Freund Hein, a skeleton from German folk art who plays the fiddle and leads a "death dance." The scherzo movement represents the dance, with the violin's unusual tuning adding to the tension and contributing to the music's ghostly character.

The third movement (*peacefully, somewhat slowly*) is a solemn march cast as a set of variations on two different themes. According to Mahler, the movement was inspired by a vision of a church sepulcher, with the reclining stone figures of the dead having "their arms closed in eternal peace."

The fourth movement (*very comfortably*) opens with an innocent phrase on the clarinet setting the mood of childish innocence. The soprano presents the child's sunny, naïve vision of heaven and then depicts the feast being prepared for all the saints including a sacrificed lamb, garden vegetables and fruits, and fish freshly caught by St. Peter. There is also music sung by 11,000 virgins and choirs of angels. The symphony then draws to a tranquil close.

August 2, 2011

Program Notes

by Will Hertz

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)
String Quartet in B-Flat Major, K. 589,
“Second Prussian”**

Biographies of Mozart generally tell you that he composed three string quartets on a commission from Frederick William II, the King of Prussia. Well, maybe not. According to Maynard Solomon’s recent and well received biography of the composer, that commission may have been a figment of Mozart’s imagination.

The winter of 1788-89 was an unusually depressing one for Mozart. With only a meager income from his position as composer of the royal court, he was constantly in debt. His wife’s poor health put a further strain on his financial and psychological resources, compelling him to appeal to friends and fellow Masons for emergency transfusions of funds.

In the spring, consequently, he responded more than willingly when a friend and pupil, Prince Karl Lichnowsky, offered to take him to Berlin and introduce him to Frederick William. His Highness was a skilled and enthusiastic cellist, and he maintained an excellent court opera and orchestra. Two years earlier Haydn had written six quartets on commission from the king, and Mozart understandably anticipated a generous series of commissions for himself.

As things turned out, Mozart was lionized at Dresden on the way to Berlin. There is conflicting evidence about what happened at Potsdam, the king’s palace and the alleged commission is a matter of some conjecture.

On the one hand, en route to Berlin Mozart wrote to his wife Constanza that he had been assured that the king was eagerly expecting him. After his arrival, he wrote her again that he had received two royal commissions – six quartets with a cello part for the king and six easy clavier pieces for young Princess Friederike – and payment of 100 *friedrichs d’or*. And on his return to Vienna, he reported the same commission to his Masonic friends, who had probably financed the trip.

On the other hand, a court record dated April 26, 1788, the date of Mozart’s arrival in Berlin, shows that, far from the king’s eagerly awaiting him, Mozart’s arrival at court was wholly unexpected:

“One named Mozart (who at his ingress declared himself to be a *kapellmeister* from Vienna) reports that he was brought hither in the company of Prince Lichnowsky, that he desired to lay his talents before Your Sovereign Majesty’s feet and waited the command whether he may hope that Your Sovereign Majesty will receive him.”

The king then wrote on the document the words, “Directeur du Port,” meaning that Mozart was to be referred to the court director of chamber music, the cellist Jean Pierre Duport, for whatever action Duport considered appropriate. On April 29, Mozart visited Duport, an old acquaintance, bearing a set of piano variations on a theme by Duport that he had produced for the occasion, but there is no indication that this meeting or goodwill gesture led to a royal audience.

Beyond this, according to biographer Maynard Solomon, no court records, letters, memoirs, newspaper accounts or documents of any kind have ever been found at Potsdam to confirm Mozart’s appearance at court, the award of any commissions, or the payment of any compensation.

Mozart’s own letters, then, are the only documentation for his “success” at Potsdam. How much of his account was a fiction to justify his arduous trip to Berlin to his wife and his Viennese friends?

The only thing we know for sure is that on his return to Vienna in June, Mozart immediately turned out one quartet, K. 575, which he earmarked for the Prussian king in his own thematic catalog, and after 11 months, two more quartets, K. 589 and K. 590. The remaining three quartets, if ever requested, were never written. Further, only one keyboard piece was composed for Princess Friederike.

If there was a commission for six quartets and six keyboard pieces, why would a hard-pressed composer have turned his back on a possible future source of income?

Here's an alternative scenario: The king's chamber-music director suggested to Mozart that he submit a string quartet for the king and maybe a little something for the princess. Mozart sent in the quartet and the sonata but heard nothing. Eleven months later he thought he'd try again, this time with two quartets. Still nothing – so he dropped the whole business.

At any rate, in June 1790, Mozart wrote to a Mason friend that he had sold the three quartets to a Vienna publisher “for a trifling sum just to get some money in hand.” The quartets were published, without any dedication to the king or anyone else, shortly after Mozart's death the following year.

In musical content, the three quartets are consistent with Mozart's claim that they were intended for the Prussian king. Their most conspicuous feature is the rich, often virtuoso, cello part that Mozart might well have written for royalty. The cello shares with the first violin the presentation of the main themes, and scale passages and rapid string crossings are written to show off the cellist's technique.

Further, Mozart accomplished this without upsetting the string quartet's inherent balance. For one thing, he offset the cello part by giving featured passages to the viola and the second violin. For another, he wrote most of the cello solos in the instrument's upper register, often elevating the viola as well, and he thus created a new type of tonal brilliance in quartet writing.

In the first movement of K. 589, for example, the two lyrical subsidiary themes are assigned to the cello. The second theme, a wide-ranging melody, is seasoned by chromatics (half-steps). The two themes are linked by running triplet passages, which then play an important part in the development and lead to the recapitulation of the main themes.

The main section of the *largo* second movement is an *arioso* for the cello, which states the songlike first theme, echoed by the first violin. The violin introduces the lovely second theme, to be followed by a cello repeat.

In structural terms, the third movement minuet is the most unusual movement of the quartet, surpassing all of Mozart's other chamber-music minuets in originality and brilliance. In the main section, the first violin has a concerto-like role. The ensuing trio, unusually long at 66 measures, then develops the main section of the minuet instead of introducing contrasting musical material. This complex structure is marked by an insistent rhythm played by pairs of instruments – one pair playing 8th notes and the other 16ths, and imposes virtuoso demands on all four musicians.

The concluding *allegro* begins on a lighthearted note, but turns serious in its use of contrapuntal passages and unexpected harmonic shifts. All this leads to a surprisingly quiet ending.

Continued on page 37

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Romanza: “Ich schleige bang”, D. 787, No. 2

This is a soprano “romance” taken from *Die Verschworenen (The Conspirators)*, a farcical *singspiel* (operetta) composed by Schubert in 1823, but never performed until 1861. It was originally written with an orchestral accompaniment, but long after Schubert’s death it was published as a separate piece with a piano and clarinet accompaniment by Schubert’s nephew, Dr. Eduard Schneider.

The libretto for the *singspiel* was published by the playwright, I. F. Cantelli, in February 1823, with a challenge to Vienna’s composers to set it to music. Schubert accepted the challenge, completing the score in April.

The Austrian imperial censors considered the plot subversive – there could be no talk of conspiracies in Metternich’s Vienna. First they changed the title to “Domestic Warfare,” and then they blocked the entire production. It was not until 1861 that the operetta was produced and 1889 that the work was published.

The tongue-in-cheek libretto is an adaptation of Aristophanes’s cynical anti-war comedy *Lysistrata* to medieval Germany at the time of the Crusades. A group of women, tired of the repeated absences of their crusading husbands, vow to withhold all matrimonial rights until the men promise to abandon their martial exploits. In response, the husbands renounce their wives unless the women fight alongside them.

The operetta, in one act, consists of 12 sections for varied voices and combinations of voices. We hear section No. 2, “I creep about in fear and silence,” in which Helene laments the departure of her husband to the wars the day after their wedding. She sings of her lonely and loveless life in one of Schubert’s tenderest melodies. The featured part for the clarinet was in Schubert’s original scoring.

Franz Schubert

Der Hirt auf dem Felsen (The Shepherd on the Rock)

D. 965

Schubert made his living as a composer of *hausmusik*, mainly *lieder* (songs) and easy-to-play piano pieces that could be performed in Viennese homes. He produced more than 600 *lieder*, of which nearly 190 were published during his short lifetime. In fact, he wrote so many *lieder* that publishers were unable to keep pace with his productivity – in the three years following his death, they issued another 100 of them.

In these *lieder*, Schubert was the first master of a German song style in which the music is closely wedded to the verse. The poetic images inspire the musical language, while the music illuminates and intensifies the emotional expression of the words. From his earliest *lieder*, moreover, Schubert assigned a major role to the accompanying piano, using it to paint a tonal picture of the scene, story, object or emotional mood depicted in the text. To fully grasp the beauty and inventiveness of Schubert’s songs, it is essential both to follow the words and to listen to the voice and piano as integral parts of the whole.

Schubert composed *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen* in October, 1828, a month before his death, and it was one of his last two songs. Published in 1830, the song is unusual in requiring both a virtuoso clarinetist as well as a piano accompanist.

Schubert composed the song belatedly for Anna Milder-Hauptman, the prima donna of the Berlin opera, who had written him four years earlier asking for material to sing on her concert tours. Long an admirer of his songs, she had sung two of them at a concert in Berlin in June 1824, and had sent him a clipping of the favorable newspaper review. She also tried, unsuccessfully, to arrange the performance in Berlin of one of his operas.

After Schubert’s death, his brother Ferdinand found “The Shepherd” in Schubert’s papers and sent it to a Viennese publisher and to Milder-Hauptman. She gave the first performance in March 1830, but the song, possibly because of its unusual instrumental requirements, then disappeared from sight. It was finally revived in 1902 by the Vienna Schubert Society and is now a concert favorite.

The text of the song is a hodge-podge in three sections – two abstracted from the poetry of Wilhelm Müller, who wrote the text for Schubert’s song cycle *Die schöne Müllerin*, and one by Wilhelmine von Chézy, who wrote the play *Rosamunde* for which Schubert composed the incidental music. It is a virtuoso vocal piece. While the shepherd “pipes” his distant call, the singer, perched high on a rock and looking down into the valley, joyously welcomes the coming of spring.

Zdeněk Fibich (1850-1900)

Quintet for Violin, Clarinet, Horn, Cello and Piano

Zdeněk Fibich was a Czech contemporary of Smetana and Dvořák. Like them, he was a prominent composer and musician in Prague in the last half of the nineteenth century. Unlike them, however, he has achieved only modest fame in the outside world. *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* devotes six pages to Fibich, compared with 17 for Smetana and 27 for Dvořák.

Fibich's limited reputation was probably a result of biographical circumstances rather than the quality of his compositions. At a time of vigorous Czech nationalism, he was an excellent composer who merely happened to be Czech. Despite his occasional use of Czech subjects for operas and programmatic orchestral music, there is rarely anything overtly Czech about the music itself. Fibich was simply not given to onstage displays of Czech folk culture in the opera house or concert hall.

In contrast to Smetana or Dvořák, Fibich was the product of two cultures, German and Czech. He was fluent in both languages. His father was a Czech forestry official, and the composer's early life was spent on isolated wooded estates where his father worked, rather than in a town or village with a thriving folk culture. Further, his mother was an ethnic German Viennese who home-schooled the boy in her language. His parents then sent him to a German-speaking gymnasium in Vienna and finally to the great Leipzig Conservatory.

Reflecting this background, Fibich's music is generally in the vein of the great German romantics -- notably Weber, Mendelssohn, Schumann, and later Richard Wagner. While he returned to Prague to live and work, he never took up the cause of Czech independence and culture. For many years, he was ostracized by the musical establishment at the Prague National Theatre and Prague Conservatory, and was forced to rely on his private composition studio for income and students. Outside of Prague, while he published his music with his first name the German Zdenko, international publishers clamored for the Czech-sounding music his rivals were composing.

Fibich's musical interest was mainly in dramatic and orchestral works, including eight operas, three symphonies, ten shorter orchestral works, and a cycle of nearly 400 piano pieces, *Moods, Impressions, and Reminiscences*. He also wrote a dozen chamber works which were largely neglected during his lifetime. He didn't even bother to publish all of them. Only in recent years have musicians started to return to these half-forgotten pieces.

A case in point is this Quintet for violin, clarinet, horn, cello and piano, composed in 1893 and published the following year. Because of its unusual instrumentation, the Czech publisher insisted on issuing an alternative version for the conventional piano quintet, and it was in that form that the work was largely sold over the years. Then, in the 1980s, musicians re-discovered the original instrumentation and were won over by its unusual and stunning tonal effects.

The first movement, *allegro non tanto*, is in conventional sonata form. After four pizzicato notes on the cello, the energetic first theme is presented by the clarinet, answered by the violin, and then seasoned by the horn. Note that each phrase is ignited by an upward octave jump, which becomes a recurrent feature. The second theme, more lyrical and restrained, is offered by the piano. The development section expands both themes, which are then recapitulated, with the second theme this time stated by the violin. The piano opens the coda, longer and more complex than might be expected.

The contrasting tone colors made possible by these five instruments burst forth in the second movement, *largo*. First the piano states the dignified main theme at some length, this time with a recurring one octave downward jump. One by one the other instruments join in, adding their distinctive coloration. The piano offers a continuing strain, again with the added colors of the other instruments. The opening theme returns, again with the piano taking the lead and the other instruments commenting.

The third movement is a *Scherzo* with two contrasting trios. The main section is to be played, says the composer, "with wild humor." The first trio starts as a solo for the horn; eventually the violin joins in, making it a duet. The second trio, over a cello pizzicato, offers solo opportunities for the piano and clarinet, while the violin rests.

The fourth movement, *allegro con spirito*, is joyous and festive, with energetic passages alternating with more lyrical episodes. Eventually, the music comes to a grand pause, and then concludes, *grandioso*, after a hymn-like treatment of the movement's main theme.

2011 by Willard J. Hertz

August 9, 2011

Program Notes

by Will Hertz

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Piano Trio in G Major, Hob. XV, No. 25

In 1791, at the age of 58, Haydn was invited to London by a commercial concert promoter, Johann Peter Salomon. During his 18-month stay, he composed and conducted for Salomon's concerts six of his most successful symphonies, those numbered from 93 through 98. The British response was overwhelming: Haydn was generously compensated, lionized in England's salons, honored at court, and awarded an honorary degree at Oxford.

Haydn also expanded his horizons in a more intimate sense. Shortly after his arrival in London, he received a letter from a wealthy widow in her early 40s, Rebecca Schroeter, saying she would be pleased to take music lessons from Mr. Haydn whenever it suited him.

Their teacher-student relationship quickly blossomed into one of affection and intimacy. During the coming months, in fact, she wrote him 22 letters of increasing emotional involvement; while the originals have been lost, Haydn copied them into his notebook, which still exists. She further expressed her feelings by sending him presents of soap, buying blocks of tickets for his concerts, and copying music for him.

There is little doubt that Haydn reciprocated her affections. When he returned to London in 1794 for his even more successful second visit, he took rooms near Mrs. Schroeter's house, and dedicated to her three of his finest piano trios, including the one we hear this evening. Some years later he showed the copies of her letters to his first biographer, identifying them as "letters from an English widow in London who loved me. Though I was 60 years old, she was still loving and amiable, and in all likelihood I would have married her if I had been single."

Altogether Haydn wrote more than 30 piano trios, but they were nowhere near as venturesome or pioneering as his 104 symphonies and 70 string quartets. In Haydn's day the piano or its predecessor, the harpsichord, was the favored instrument for family music-making. In keeping with that function, chamber combinations involving the piano were lighter in weight than other instrumental music, and piano trios were commonly designated as sonatas for pianoforte accompanied by a violin and cello.

In contrast, the string quartet developed in Haydn's hands into a blending of four instrumental parts of approximately equal importance. As he gained experience and self-confidence in trio writing, he emancipated the violin to some extent, using its singing power to reinforce the piano's sustained melodies. However, he continued to limit the cello to doubling the bass line of the piano, a holdover from its role in Baroque music.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the piano trios are full of fresh and inventive music, particularly in their brilliant writing for the keyboard instrument. Because of their function as salon pieces, they are less formal than the quartets, in spirit and content. For example, a set of variations often replaces the more rigorous sonata form as the first movement, and a dance movement is used to wind things up.

This evening's trio is the second of the three that Haydn dedicated to Mrs. Schroeter. It begins with a lovely theme and variations in the basic G major, with the violin getting an opportunity in the tracery of the third variation and taking over the melodic line in the minor variation. The violin again has a featured role in the simple and prayer-like E major slow movement. The trio closes with one of Haydn's best known movements, a high-spirited rondo, *Rondo a l'Ongarese*, nick-named the "Gypsy Rondo", in the style which Haydn had brought with him to England from Hungary.

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

String Quartet No. 3 in F Major, Op. 73

This was the only work that Shostakovich completed in 1945, and it took him six months - an unusually long period for this customarily prolific composer. Like the Soviet Union as a whole, he was still recovering from the nation's hardships of World War II, and his friends found him nervous, bitter and depressed. As a suitable outlet, he turned to the privacy and expressive capability of chamber music, and he was in no hurry to rush the recovery process.

There is some debate among Shostakovich specialists over whether he had in mind a non-musical program reflecting the nation's wartime experience. The Borodin String Quartet, a prominent Soviet ensemble, insisted on adding war-related subtitles to each of the quartet's five movements whenever they performed the work. The Borodins had a close relationship with Shostakovich and claimed they had his approval. On the other hand, the work was published without the subtitles, and the Beethoven String Quartet, the Soviet group to whom it was dedicated, ignored them.

At any rate, the subtitles characterize the quartet as a personal reflection on the war and vividly point up the programmatic nature of the individual movements:

"Calm awareness of the future cataclysm"

"Rumblings of unrest and anticipation"

"The forces of war unleashed"

"Homage to the dead"

"The eternal question: Why? And for what?"

Shostakovich himself was highly pleased with the new quartet, writing to the Beethoven String Quartet: "It seems to me that I have never been so pleased with one of my works. Probably I am mistaken, but for the time being this is exactly how I feel."

Soviet authorities apparently felt otherwise. Before the quartet's first performance in December, Andrei Zhdanov, Stalin's cultural czar, made the first of a series of speeches attacking the nation's cultural leaders for "formalism", Soviet-speak for art with limited mass appeal. At a Composers Plenum in October, Shostakovich's Ninth Symphony, completed during the war, was criticized for its inappropriately playful and grotesque humor. The quartet was not criticized, but its reception was effectively eclipsed, and it remained in obscurity for many years.

The quartet is unconventionally cast in five movements, with an unusual emotional sequence. The first movement, in conventional sonata form, is lighthearted and almost frivolous. In the second movement, the abrupt shift in mood to a sardonic waltz, laced with dissonance, comes as a complete surprise. The succeeding movements become increasingly demanding. In the third movement, a mixture of scherzo and march, alternating between triple and duple meter, the growing bitterness breaks into violence and aggression.

The fourth movement is mired in sorrow and despair. It is dominated by a heavy five-measure phrase, stated in unison at the outset by the three lower instruments *fortissimo*, which is repeated in one form or another throughout the movement. This leads without pause into the final movement, the longest of the quartet, and the most emotionally challenging. The quartet reaches a climax with an emphatic restatement of the tragic strain of the fourth movement, and the work ends in gentle pathos and a sense of resignation.

Continued on next page

Franz Schubert

Piano Trio in B-flat major, Op. 99, D. 898

Virtually every biography of Schubert includes this famous drawing of a *schubertiad*, a festive party frequently given by Schubert's friends to hear his most recent work of music.

The scene is a crowded Viennese drawing room. Schubert, rumple-haired and bespectacled, is at the piano. Sitting next to him on the bench, his head thrown back in song, is Johann Michael Vogl, the leading baritone of the day. A large gathering of elegantly dressed ladies and gentlemen, clearly the cream of Viennese bourgeois society, is seated or standing about the performers, listening in rapt attention. The atmosphere is intimate, informal and social, the kind of party that we in Maine would love to go to if only we had a Schubert among our acquaintances.

The party shown was typical of the frequent *schubertiads* that the composer's friends gave during the final decade of his life, centered on his most recent *lieder*, chamber works or piano pieces. They were always gala events with the music supplemented by feasting, toasts with punch or Moselle wine, poetry recitations, party games (charades was a favorite) and, for the men only, acrobatic stunts. Following the concert, there was dancing. Schubert, who couldn't dance, was at the piano. At midnight, those who had the stamina adjourned to a nearby cafe or tavern to continue singing and drinking.

The drawing, entitled "A Schubert Evening at Josef von Spaun's," is particularly relevant to the B-flat Major Trio since the work was first performed at a von Spaun-hosted *schubertiad*. That event, held in January 1828, ten months before Schubert's death, was an even livelier affair than usual since von Spaun was throwing it in honor of his fiancée. According to the diary of one participant, "Altogether 50 people (attended). We nearly all got tipsy. We danced. Then we nearly all went to Bogner's (cafe) where we sat on until 2:30."

The history of the trio following von Spaun's party is something of a mystery. Schubert's E-flat major Trio, Op. 100, written about the same time, was performed in public and was published before Schubert's death. In contrast, the B-flat Major Trio, surely as infectious a piece of music, had no public performance in Schubert's lifetime, and he never even offered the work to a publisher. After his death, his brother Ferdinand found it buried in a pile of other manuscripts, discarded or forgotten.

When the trio was finally published in 1836, Schumann, who apparently had never heard of it, was unable to contain his enthusiasm. "A glance at Schubert's trio," he wrote in the music journal that he edited, "and all miserable human commotion vanishes; the world glows with a new splendor....Time, though producing much that is beautiful, will not soon produce another Schubert." Posterity has more than confirmed Schumann's assessment.

The most compelling characteristic of the trio is its lyrical sweep, its sheer melodic inventiveness. In this regard, few other chamber music works can approach it. In addition, the trio is a showcase for Schubert's gift for modulation - his changing of keys to vary the presentation, treatment and tone color of his themes. He initially developed this device to underscore the drama in the texts of his *lieder*, but later used it effectively in his mature instrumental works.

In the case of this trio, there is an almost continuous shifting of tonal gears. Melodic strains are repeated in three or four different keys, each with a different harmonic base, and modulations occur unexpectedly, even abruptly, but almost always ingeniously.

Two modulations, daring even for Schubert, can be cited in the first movement, *allegro moderato*. The first is at the introduction of the second theme: The three instruments trumpet the key of A major, and the cello, playing alone, intones the note A. Before the listener can say *schubertiad*, the cello, still on A, has embarked on the second theme in the key of F major.

The second example is at the start of the recapitulation: The closing of the development prepares us for the return of the buoyant first theme in B-flat. But there is a sudden switch in harmony and we hear the melody first in G-flat, then in D-flat, before the piano quietly takes it up in B-flat where it belongs.

These subtle changes in harmonic dress are used with equal dexterity in the other movements - in the warm, lyrical slow movement, *andante un poco mosso*, with its great flowing melody; in the impish yet graceful scherzo, *allegro*, whose middle section suggests a *landler* or Austrian country dance; and in the final rondo, *allegro vivace*, where Schubert piles modulation on modulation for an unusually long movement, a full 653 measures.