

camera lucida

Chamber music concerts at UC San Diego

2013-2014 season

Sponsored by the Sam B. Ersan Fund at the San Diego Foundation

2014 0602 - Cam Lu 8

Monday, June 2nd
Two Thousand and Fourteen
7:30pm

Piano Quartet in B minor, op. 3

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-47)

Allegro molto
Andante
Allegro molto
Allegro vivace

20

Piano Trio in F minor, No. 3, op. 65

Antonin Dvořák (1841-1904)

Allegro ma non troppo
Allegretto grazioso
Poco adagio
Finale—Allegro con brio

30

intermission

10

String Quartet in D minor, op. 56 "Voces Intimae"

Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

Andante - Allegro molto moderato
Vivace
Adagio di molto
Allegretto (ma pesante)
Allegro

40

Jeff Thayer, violin
Tereza Stanislav, violin
Che-Yen Chen, viola
Charles Curtis, cello
Özgür Aydin, piano

Felix Mendelssohn - Piano Quartet No. 3 in B minor, op. 3

The young Felix Mendelssohn is often compared to Mozart, though the connection between the two extends beyond the fact that they were both musical prodigies. At different points in their life, for example, both had their music and careers invigorated by their awareness of J.S. Bach. For Mozart, the effect was a compositional one—his later music began to rely heavily on imitative counterpoint and Baroque references. For Mendelssohn, it was his resurrection of the *St. Matthew Passion*—a work that had lain dormant for generations—that brought him international repute at the age of 20, and opened numerous doors for him as a conductor. Thus the echoes of Mozart's music in Mendelssohn's op. 3 are poignant and sensible. Both composers made it clear, early in their lives, that they had been touched by an extraordinary gift. Mozart seemed to show traces of genius as a child while Mendelssohn bloomed a bit later. The latter was sixteen when he wrote his famous E-flat octet, a work regularly named as one of the most precocious works ever written by a young composer. While the octet is masterful, it is not, really, particularly early in the list of Mendelssohn's works. When he was in his early teen years, Mendelssohn wrote a set of 12 string symphonies, and, at 13, his first published works, three piano quartets, op. 1, 2, and 3. These quartets, as a set, seem to mature almost before our eyes. The artistic range the music covers, from the opening of the quartet in C minor, op. 1 (whose principal melody apes the beginning of Mozart's late piano sonata in the same key) to the end of the quartet in B minor, op. 3, is nothing short of astounding, considering the diminutive age of the composer. The work is dedicated to Goethe, who had befriended Mendelssohn several years earlier.

The first movement, *Allegro molto*, begins with an ominous determination, grinding upward through chromatic dissonances in the first theme. This structure is highly original, with the opening gesture returning to stain the otherwise placid second key group, and a development section that embarks on an entirely new tempo. The writing for the piano is as volcanic as is Mendelssohn's appetite—again, bewildering in such a young man—for extended and untiring exploration of a vast musical terrain. The wistful, even sentimental *Andante* opens with the solo piano, fixating on a chromatic ascent that is redefined diatonically by the string entrance, and later reworked in such a way that makes it clear that it derives from the opening ascent of the first movement. Mendelssohn's music is driven by activity, and the scherzo, marked *Allegro molto*, shows the invention and facility for speedy and nimble textures that would be so central to his concert overtures and symphonies. The finale, *Allegro vivace*, begins trembling and tense, before vaulting into a rondo whose episodes are infused with a surprising ability to craft affect and mood. The instrumental writing is at all times clear and winning, and as the movement moves toward the ending in the most natural way, any sense of this as music by an immature composer is finally pushed aside as we are dazzled by the concision, facility and immediacy of an extraordinary musical mind.

Antonin Dvořák - Piano Trio No. 3 in F minor, op. 65

Dvořák wrote the F minor Trio, his third of four, in 1883. From the opening of the piece, the influence of Brahms (Dvořák's friend and mentor) can be felt. Dvořák's chamber music always relies on melody as the central aspect of the musical discourse, but in this piece, perhaps due to his close contact with Brahms, melody is layered into textures of a driving, stressed lyricism that was, for Dvořák, very new. Brahms' influence can be felt not only in the tone of the work, but in the handling of the piano, whose part is of immense difficulty and whose role is carefully crafted with respect to register, unifying and enveloping the violin and cello during their solo melodic episodes.

The first movement *Allegro ma non troppo* is broad in scope, with a melodic invention so plenteous that each melodic idea seems impatient to finish itself so that the next one can arrive; and materials are characterized by such volatile eruptions that the borders between exposition, development, and recapitulation are barely discernible, except by the listener's basic feel for scale and proportion. The Scherzo, marked *Allegro grazioso*, is an unequivocal tribute to Brahms, as it features the *hemiola*—or alternating patterns of duple and triple beat division—that is associated with Brahms as with no one else. The Trio is shimmering and sonorous, with agile offbeat hocket motion in the strings and piano. Motion is strikingly slowed in the elegiac *Poco adagio*, at least briefly. The sense, however, of a leftover drive from the previous two movements is palpable, as even in this slow movement the inertia of melodic outpouring takes command of the moments of quietude. The finale *Allegro con brio* returns to the *hemiola* idea, as the theme vacillates between 3/4 and 6/8. The intense and mercurial array of ideas encountered in the first movement returns, and we find an enlightening opportunity for diverse cultural unison between Dvořák and Brahms in a Gypsy-edged waltz.

Jean Sibelius - String Quartet in D minor, op. 56 "Voces Intimae"

The first decades of the 20th Century were characterized by great artistic upheaval, as many of the fundamental principles of the performing and plastic arts underwent drastic change, with a number of their bedrock principles in a seemingly constant state of erosion. The parallels between the artistic disciplines during this time are telling: as abstraction in painting displaced representation, and the unquestioned repertoire of classical ballet movements gave way to the "primitive" gestures seen in *Le Sacre*, so too did tonality, and tonal organization in music, begin to evolve. This was also a time of heightened national artistic identity, and artists oriented themselves toward this state of change and exploration in ways unique to their cultural contexts. The year 1909 was rich in this regard: Schoenberg finished his *Five Pieces for Orchestra*, Mahler composed his *Lied von der Erde*, and Rachmaninov's third piano concerto was premiered. All of these works wrestle, to varying degrees, with the new opportunities for musical expression, and it was this context in which Sibelius' only string quartet can be heard.

Subtitled "Intimate Voices" (a name that can be taken—and may have been meant—metaphorically to describe string quartet playing itself), the work articulates many of the same issues associated with more notorious pieces of the age. The first movement *Andante* begins with melancholy solo statements in the first violin and cello—the lack of accompanimental harmony a foreshadowing of tonal ambiguity. Melodic motives are short, allowing them to be easily redefined in a roving harmonic scheme that, despite visiting numerous tonal areas, almost completely eschews definitive modulations and cadences. Different structural parts are conveyed as much by states of motion as by a sense of key, until the end of the movement, which ends, remarkably, not in the original tonic of D minor, but in a sudden cadence in A minor, leading immediately into the *vivace* scherzo. This second movement uses a dotted scalar idea from the *Andante* as its main recurrent melodic idea, and seems almost like a fantasy on a path not taken in the previous movement. Sonority itself (conveyed through brilliant and sumptuous string writing)—the intoxication of sound—becomes a topic here. Curiously, just as the first movement ended with a clear tonal arrival that propelled us into the scherzo, this movement finishes with a strangely cheeky gesture that focuses our attention on the upcoming music. The third movement, *Adagio di molto*, appears as a through-composed song, alternating between traditional tonal chordal sonorities and extended, piquant, chromatic harmony. The high degree of rhythmic syncopation in the music is for the most part hidden, save for important climactic moments. The materials seem reiterative rather than repetitive—as ideas return, they do so without any clear sense of formal symmetry or layout. Only when we hear the beginning of the fourth movement *Allegretto (ma pesante)* do we realize that the piece deviates from the traditional four-movement plan of most string quartets.

This movement is clearly designed to contrast the slippery metrical quality of the *Adagio* with an unambiguous triple-time idea in the dorian mode. The clarity of the opening is used, it turns out, as a foil for rest of the material, which becomes increasingly active and turbulent, leaving behind the certainty of measure and phrase of the opening. Like many quartets that add to the four-movement plan, the function of this movement is open to question—and this is reflected in a certain hybridity: part scherzo, part dance. The final *Allegro* is culminative in compositional technique as much as in musical content; indeed, this movement returns to many of the ideas heard earlier: the dazzling rolling multiple string sonorities from the scherzo, the open fifths from the first movement, and a reliance on motion (and the excitement created by it) rather than motive to suggest the return of important ideas. We can perceive here the modern fascination with sound and speed, as blocks of material ascend, in almost brutal fashion, toward the finish.

about the performers

Violinist **Jeff Thayer** is currently the concertmaster of the San Diego Symphony as well as concertmaster and faculty member of the Music Academy of the West (Santa Barbara). Previous positions include assistant concertmaster of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, associate concertmaster of the North Carolina Symphony, and concertmaster of the Canton (OH) Symphony Orchestra. He is a graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Music, the Eastman School of Music, and the Juilliard School's Pre-College Division. His teachers include William Preucil, Donald Weilerstein, Zvi Zeitlin, Dorothy DeLay, and James Lyon. He has appeared as soloist with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the San Diego Symphony, the Jupiter Symphony, the North Carolina Symphony, the Canton Symphony Orchestra, the Pierre Monteux School Festival Orchestra, the Spartanburg Philharmonic, the Cleveland Institute of Music Symphony Orchestra, The Music Academy of the West Festival Orchestra, the Williamsport Symphony Orchestra, the Nittany Valley Symphony Orchestra, and the Conservatory Orchestra of Cordoba, among others. Through a generous loan from Irwin and Joan Jacobs and the Jacobs' Family Trust, Mr. Thayer plays on the 1708 "Sir Bagshawe" Stradivarius.

Violinist **Tereza Stanislav** was appointed Assistant Concertmaster of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra in 2003 by music director Jeffrey Kahane. Dividing her time among orchestral, solo, chamber and recording projects, Tereza has been hailed for her "expressive beauty and wonderful intensity" (Robert Mann) and her "sure technique and musical intelligence" (Calgary Herald). An active performer, Tereza has appeared in venues including Alice Tully Hall, the Library of Congress, the Kennedy Center, Wigmore Hall, the Ravinia Music Festival, Bravo! Vail, the Chautauqua Festival, Merkin Concert Hall, La Jolla Summerfest, Charlottesville Chamber Music Festival, the Banff Center in Canada, St. Barth's Music Festival and at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall. She has performed in concert with artists including Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Gilbert Kalish, Jon Kimura Parker, Colin Currie, and Monica Huggett. In 2004, Tereza released a CD in collaboration with pianist Hung-Kuan Chen. This season, Tereza served as Concertmaster of the Los Angeles' Opera production of *The Marriage of Figaro*, conducted by Plácido Domingo. In 2009, Tereza was invited to be the Chamber Music Collaborator for Sonata Programs and a member of the jury for the Sixth Esther Honens International Piano Competition, as well as the soloist on a Central European tour performing Mozart's Fifth Violin Concert.

upcoming concerts

Monday, June 10

Myriad Trio and Camera Lucida

For more information about tickets, contact the
San Diego Symphony ticket office at 619.235.0804 or via the web at:
<http://www.sandiegosymphony.org/concertcalendar/cameralucida.aspx>

Tonight's concert will be broadcast Saturday, June 7th at 7 pm on
kpbs-fm 89.5 or streaming at kpbs.org

Artistic Director - Charles Curtis
Executive Coordinator - Colin McAllister
Program notes - Lukas Schulze
Recording engineer - Tom Erbe
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