

# *Chamber Music*

HOUSTON FRIENDS OF MUSIC  
THE SHEPHERD SCHOOL OF MUSIC

2000-2001

# *Houston Friends of Music*

was created 40 years ago to bring Houstonians the finest chamber music  
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We also sponsor master classes for music students, given by our guest artists.

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continue the Friends' educational outreach program.

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box office number to call is:

713-348-5363.

## *Upcoming Concerts*

2000-2001 SEASON

MUIR QUARTET

with Guest Artist,

David Shifrin, Clarinet

Thursday, October 19, 2000

PACIFICA QUARTET

Tuesday, November 7, 2000

CHANTICLEER

Thursday, January 18, 2001

TOKYO STRING QUARTET

Tuesday, January 30, 2001

BORRROMEO

TRIO FONTENAY

Thursday, March 15, 2001

AMERICAN BRASS  
QUINTET

Wednesday, April 4, 2001



HOUSTON FRIENDS OF MUSIC

STUDE CONCERT HALL • ALICE PRATT BROWN HALL • RICE UNIVERSITY

THURSDAY, MARCH 15, 2001, 8:00 P.M.

TRIO FONTENAY

*Wolf Harden, Piano • Michael Mücke, Violin*

*Jens Peter Maintz, Cello*

PROGRAM

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

*Trio in B-flat Major, Op. 97 ("Archduke")*

Allegro moderato

Scherzo: Allegro

Andante cantabile

Allegro moderato

INTERMISSION

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF (1873-1943)

*Trio Élégiacque No. 2 in D Minor, Op. 9*

Moderato—Allegro vivace

Quasi variazione; Andante; Allegro; Lento

Allegro risoluto—Moderato



NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
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TELDEC, EMI, and DENON

Exclusive Management: Arts Management Group, Inc., 150 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011.

(212) 337-0838 tel.; (212) 924-0382 fax; info@artsmg.com.

THIS PROJECT IS SUPPORTED IN PART BY A GRANT FROM THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS.

Photographing and sound recording are prohibited. We further request that audible paging devices not be used during performances.

Paging arrangements may be made with the ushers.

Martin Merritt-Stage Manager Tim Dickson-Technical Director and Lighting Designer

Program Design by Geri Snider Creative Services

## *Trio in B-flat Major, Opus 97* (“Archduke”)

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

In a critique of one of Beethoven's early works, Franz Joseph Haydn observed, “You give me the impression of a man who has several heads, several hearts, and several souls.” The challenges which faced Beethoven in his middle period--the deafness which threatened to isolate him from the world of sound, his inability to find happiness in a loving relationship, the dwindling power and wealth of his patrons--magnified the opposing forces at work within the composer. These circumstances were enough to try the strongest spirit. But Beethoven's true gift was his capacity to synthesize contrasts into a greater whole, to find a point of union beyond the limits of expectation.

The Trio in B-flat Major, Op. 97, reigns as one of Beethoven's most exquisite compositions, and is an unrivalled crown jewel of the piano trio repertoire. Its nickname “Archduke” reflects not only the refinement and regality of its musical form, but also refers directly to Archduke Rudolph, Beethoven's pupil and patron and the Trio's dedicatee. Beethoven began sketches for this composition in 1810, enabling him to complete the work in only three weeks in March of 1811. A letter to his benefactor written toward the end of that month excuses the composer's absence from his court post in a manner verging on the saccharine: “During the festivities for the Princess of Baden, and because of the sore finger of Your Imperial Highness, I began to work somewhat industriously, of which, among other things, a new Trio for the piano is a fruit.”

Beethoven was well aware of his dependence on the patronage of aristocratic families; the French Revolution had liberated his political spirit, but not his financial situation. In 1808 King Jerome Bonaparte had offered Beethoven the position of Kapellmeister at Kassel with an enticing paycheck. Archduke Rudolph countered by guaranteeing Beethoven a salary of 4,000 gulden on condition that he would not leave Vienna. Napoleon's 1809 invasion of Vienna, however, gutted the aristocratic economy, and Beethoven's salary shrank to a third of its former size. Suffering financial duress and increasingly irritated by his duties to Archduke Rudolph, Beethoven nonetheless managed to create a work of purest inspiration. The Trio in B-flat Major, Op. 97 is proof of art's capacity to transcend human experience.

Nothing in Beethoven's personal life indicates that March 1811 was a psychological upswing for the composer. Biographers have contrasted the joyous “Archduke” with the melancholy Quartet in F minor, Op. 95 (“Quartetto serioso”), composed in 1810, and have surmised that Beethoven simply overcame his gloom. This implication is naive pseudo-psychoanalysis and out of line with Beethoven's own understanding of his creative process: “Every real creation of art is independent, more powerful than the artist himself and returns to the divine through its manifestation.” The “Quartetto serioso” foreshadows the otherworldly spirituality of the works of his Late Period. It is a work of discovery whose form was yet to evolve. The “Archduke” is a work of achieved mastery, a perfection of form and content.

The *Allegro moderato* opens with a smooth, majestic theme presented by the solo piano. Expanding to include the strings, the opening



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theme continues in unison until it flows into the second subject, three elongated phrases in G Major. The development, divided into three distinct sections, is alternately sprightly and demure. The movement then glides nobly into the recapitulation which features a slightly embellished version of the opening theme. A brilliant coda crowns the movement.

Instead of the conventional slow movement, Beethoven introduces a charming *Scherzo* in the second position, as though he could hardly be expected to dampen the glow of the *Allegro moderato*. The buoyant B-flat *Scherzo* is repeated three times. Its trio introduces a striking chromatic passage which contrasts with bursts of a waltz melody. The movement subsides delicately, hovering almost motionless on the tonic.

The *Andante cantabile* is a set of five variations on a serene theme that is stated first by the piano and repeated by the entire ensemble. The second and third variations are more active, but they never disrupt the stately grace established in the beginning. The *Allegro moderato* follows without pause and provides an energetic, good-humored contrast. The rhythmic pattern of the opening motif is developed until a sudden change of key and tempo brings the piece to an exciting close.

### *Trio Élégiacque No. 2 in D Minor, Op. 9*

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

The fifteen-year-old Sergei Rachmaninoff entered the Moscow Conservatory in 1888 to study piano with Alexander Siloti and composition with Taneyev and Arensky. He was a brilliant student. At the age of nineteen, he

wrote the Prelude in C-sharp minor, which carried his name to music lovers around the world. He graduated from the piano curriculum in 1891 with a gold medal for excellence, and finished his studies as a composer the following year, upon which occasion the faculty unanimously voted to place his name on the Conservatory's Roll of Honor. Rachmaninoff himself related one of his proudest moments as a student: "Amongst the examining professors sat Tchaikovsky. The highest mark given was a five, which could, in exceptional cases, be supplemented by a plus sign. I already knew I had been given this mark. When I finished playing my 'Song Without Words,' Tchaikovsky rose and busied himself with the examination journal. It was only after a fortnight that I heard what he had been doing with it: he had added three more plus signs to my mark, one on top, one below, and one behind. This five with four plus marks—a unique occurrence in the annals of the Conservatory—was naturally much discussed, and the story made the rounds of all Moscow."

After spending the summer of 1893 composing his Opuses 5, 6, and 7 in Kharkov, at the country home of his wealthy merchant friend Lyssikov, Rachmaninoff returned to Moscow and attended a gathering of musicians assembled to hear Leo Conus' piano arrangement of Tchaikovsky's new Sixth Symphony ("Pathétique"), scheduled for its public orchestral premiere the following month. "At the close of the evening, Rachmaninoff acquainted us with his newly completed symphonic poem, 'The Rock,'" recorded the composer Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov. "The work pleased us all very much, especially Tchaikovsky, who was enthusiastic over its colorfulness." Indeed, Tchaikovsky formed so high an opinion of the

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piece that he asked Rachmaninoff if he could conduct it on his European tour the following winter, one of the few works by another composer in which he ever expressed such an interest. The performances, unfortunately, were never to take place. Just six weeks later, on November 6th, only days after the premiere of his "Pathétique" Symphony, Tchaikovsky suddenly died. The loss was a deep personal and professional sorrow for Rachmaninoff. He was so stricken by Tchaikovsky's death that mere words could not contain his grief, so he poured his feelings into the music of the Trio Élégiaque (Op. 9), begun on the day he learned of the tragedy. Rachmaninoff applied himself with great fervor to the piece, reporting to his friend Natalia Skalon after the score was finished, "While working on it, all my thoughts, feelings, powers belonged to it, to this threnody . . . I trembled for every phrase, sometimes crossed out everything and started over again to think, to think."

The first of the Trio Élégiaque's three movements is an expansive sonata form, full of melody and formal event. It begins with a mournful descending figure in the piano, a sighing motive that had been used in music since the time of the Renaissance to denote grief. Cello and violin drape a long incantatory theme of exotic melodic leadings upon the piano's obsessive reiterations of the grief motive. An impassioned outburst that drives the violin into its highest register soon quiets so that a brief, unaccompanied cello phrase can lead to the formal second theme, a strongly rhythmic subject based on three descending notes, arranged short-short-long. Riding piano arpeggios introduce the movement's third subject, reminiscent in shape of the second theme but more lyrical in contour. All three themes

contribute material to the development section. A full recapitulation (with the strings and piano exchanging roles for the main theme) rounds out the movement. The second movement is a large-scale set of eight variations of contrasting character upon the hymnal theme played by the piano at the beginning. The finale is arranged in two principal sections: the first is dramatic, filled with sharp contrasts and fiery proclamations; the second recalls the mournful music that opened the Trio.

*Program notes provided by Arts Management Group.*

### *Trio Fontenay*

Since its formation in 1980, Trio Fontenay has been lavishly praised by critics for their technical excellence, richness of tone, and depth of interpretive imagination. Inspired by their early study with the Amadeus Quartet, the ensemble performs throughout Europe, North and South America, Australia, and the Far East. They are regularly welcomed in London, Munich, Hamburg, Berlin, and Amsterdam, and were named "Trio-in-Residence" at Paris' Théâtre Chatelet. In the 1995-1996 season they performed the complete Beethoven cycle at Paris' Théâtre Chatelet, London's Wigmore Hall, Berlin's Schauspielhaus, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, and in Munich, Cologne, and Hamburg.

In North America, the Trio has played at Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall, and has made return appearances in Montreal, Toronto, Buffalo, Kansas City, Houston, and Pasadena. This season, the Trio's performances include concerts in Seattle, Detroit, New Orleans, Houston, Buffalo, New York City, and at Spivey Hall.

Trio Fontenay has recorded for Denon,



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EMI Electrola, and Teldec, where the Trio signed another five-year exclusive contract. Their recording of the Beethoven Piano Trios for Teldec received the 1994 Preis Der Deutschen Schallplattendritik, the German Record Critics Award. They have recorded the complete piano trios by Brahms, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Schubert, and Dvorák, as well as works by Ives, Schumann, and a Ravel/Debussy/Fauré disc.

The name "Fontenay" was chosen for two reasons: first, it is the old French translation for "source" and "fantasy"; and second, it is the name of the street near the Hamburg Conservatory where the ensemble first met to practice. The Trio Fontenay has won numerous awards and competitions in Europe.

Michael Mücke's violin was made in Piacenza by Gaspare Lorenzini in 1780; Jens-Peter Maintz's cello, dated 1696, is by Vincenzo Ruggeri.

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### NEXT CONCERT

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 4, 2001  
STUDE CONCERT HALL, 8:00 P.M.

### *American Brass Quintet*

Works by Luca Marenzio, Osvaldo Lacerda,  
Robert Beaser, Luigi Cherubini,  
Josquin des Pres, and Eric Ewazen.

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### *Amateur Chamber Music Alert*

The Houston Friends of Music wants to know how many amateur musicians in our community would be interested in participating in a program of weekend workshops devoted to instrumental and vocal chamber music.

The Amateur Chamber Music Players Foundation currently provides partial sponsorship for professional chamber music ensembles to coach adult, amateur workshops. If you are interested, please call our office at 713-348-5400. If there is sufficient response we will apply for the grant. Please be aware that there would be some participant fee associated with this program.

### *Houston Friends of Music*

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