

Chamber Music

HOUSTON FRIENDS OF MUSIC
THE SHEPHERD SCHOOL OF MUSIC

2000-2001

HOUSTON FRIENDS OF MUSIC

Houston Friends of Music

was created 40 years ago to bring Houstonians the finest chamber music
by recognized international ensembles.

As our presence in Houston has grown, a related commitment has emerged:
to share this experience with the younger generation and new audiences.

We provide free tickets for students at twenty high schools and colleges in the area.

We also sponsor master classes for music students, given by our guest artists.

As a 501(c3) charitable organization, your gifts are instrumental in
enabling us to maintain our high quality of performers and to
continue the Friends' educational outreach program.

For information on contributions, concert underwriting,
matching gifts, bequests or gifts of stock, please call
HOUSTON FRIENDS OF MUSIC at 713-348-5400.

If you are unable to attend a performance, please contact us during the day at the above phone number
for a tax-deductible donation of tickets; after 7:00 p.m. the day of the concert the
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

CHANTICLEER

Thursday, January 18, 2001

TRIO FONTENAY

Thursday, March 15, 2001

TOKYO STRING QUARTET

Tuesday, January 30, 2001

AMERICAN BRASS

QUINTET

Wednesday, April 4, 2001

PACIFICA QUARTET

Tuesday, November 7, 2000

BORROMEO

HOUSTON FRIENDS OF MUSIC

STUDE CONCERT HALL * ALICE PRATT BROWN HALL * RICE UNIVERSITY

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2000

PACIFICA QUARTET

Simin Ganatra, Violin • Sibbi Bernhardsson, Violin

Kathryn Lockwood, Viola • Brandon Vamos, Cello

PROGRAM

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Quartet in B-Flat Major, Op. 18, No. 6

Allegro con brio • Adagio, ma non troppo

Scherzo: Allegro

La Malinconia: Adagio; Allegretto quasi allegro

ASTOR PIAZZOLLA (1921-1992)

Tango for Four

INTERMISSION

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810-1856)

Quartet in A Minor, Op. 41, No. 1

Introduzione: Andante espressivo; Allegro

Scherzo: Presto; Intermezzo

Adagio • Presto

The PACIFICA QUARTET is represented by Melvin Kaplan, Inc.,

115 College Street, Burlington, Vermont 05401

Recordings: Cedille Records

www.pacificaquartet.com

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 Matt Coldwell-Technical Director and Lighting Designer

Quartet in B-flat Major, Op. 18, No. 6

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

From written records left by visitors to Vienna at the end of the 18th Century, one learns that no city in Europe was more focused on its pleasures – from the sublime to the frivolous or worse – than this adopted home of Beethoven's. Stendahl, who lived there as an eye-witness to the times, explains it in terms of the political system then in force; the arts, and particularly instrumental music above all, were a safe outlet for expression and a safe setting for social gatherings in what was in fact a time of political repression, with a system of spies and surveillance foreshadowing the police state later to be put in place by Metternich. Here is the description from his *Letters on Haydn* written to a friend:

"In this Vienna, the winter residence of the Esterhazys...and of so many other noble families, surrounded by an almost regal pomp, there is not that brilliant display of mind which was to be found in the salons of Paris before our stupid revolution; nor has Reason raised her altars there as at London. A certain restraint, which forms a part of the prudent policy of the house of Austria, has inclined the people to pleasures of a more sensual kind, which are less troublesome to a government.... In a word, at Vienna, politics and abstract reasoning on possible improvements being prohibited, pleasure has taken possession of every heart." All this worked for the benefit of music making, of which chamber

music was the most esteemed by the aristocracy which generously supported it. It is in this setting that Beethoven presented his Opus 18 set of six string quartets, premiered by the Schuppanzigh Quartet at the home of Prince Lichnowsky, in 1801.

The last of the published set, Op. 18, No. 6, starts out on an exceptionally light-hearted note, reminiscent of opera buffa. It is notable for its economy of thematic material and harmonic progressions, as well as for its light texture in a classic sonata form. The second movement is an elegant, melodic, even rhapsodic *da capo* aria of great simplicity, in marked contrast to the rollicking *Scherzo-Trio* which follows. In this movement, Beethoven seems to defy the listener to keep time, as duple and triple meter compete for attention. The absence of strong beats and the infrequency with which all four voices come together produces a musical roller coaster which ends only towards the very end, and even then, in the last measure, the three lower instruments slip away. It is the final movement for which this quartet is most famous, the *Finale, La Malinconia*, with its soul-searching opening *Adagio*, alternating with a contemplative, good-natured *Allegretto quasi Allegro*. Not only are the mood-swings unprecedented and dramatic, but Beethoven employs several technical elements of interest – repeated use of the inverted turn, beginning on the lower note, in contradistinction to the standard eighteenth-century format which starts on the upper note, as well as a modulation to a very distant key which is most unexpected in an otherwise rather harmonically traditional

work. The movement ends with a madcap *Prestissimo* as if to assure the listener that he need not pay too much attention to all that serious stuff.

Program notes by Nora Avins Klein.

Tango for Four

ASTOR PIAZZOLLA

Astor Piazzolla, internationally renowned Argentinian composer and bandoneon player, emerged onto the classical stage with his own specialized tango. He brought to the traditional tango influences as diverse as jazz, contemporary classicism, and Italian opera. In answer to critics, he said, "Yes, but the presidents change, and they say nothing.... Bishops change, soccer players, anything, but not the tango. The tango is to be kept like it is: old, boring, always the same, repeated. My tango is in the present."

As a boy in New York, he studied traditional tango with Carlos Gardel, the legendary tango singer. When he returned to Argentina, he tried to earn a degree in accounting, but soon decided to devote himself entirely to music. "Music," he said, "is more than a woman, because you can divorce a woman, but not music. Once you marry her, she is your everlasting love, and you go to the grave with her."

After he began to compose, he dared to introduce himself to the pianist Artur Rubinstein, who was then living in Buenos Aires. After playing a few bars of one of his pieces, Rubinstein asked Piazzolla if he liked

music. "Yes, maestro." "Then why don't you study?" After this encounter, Piazzolla went to study with Ginastera, who "revealed to me the mystery of the orchestra; he showed me his scores, made me analyze Stravinsky. I entered the world of 'The Rite of Spring' – I learned it note by note." He began to compose "like a lunatic," and eventually found his way to France where he studied with Nadia Boulanger. "She looked through my kilos of symphonies and asked me where Piazzolla was in all of this? She taught me to believe in Astor Piazzolla, to believe that my music wasn't as bad as I thought. I thought that I was a piece of trash because I played tangos in a cabaret, but I had something called style.... I suddenly became free."

"Tango for Four" came about after hearing the Kronos Quartet play in New York.

Program notes based on an interview by Gonzalo Saavedra in July 1989, translated by David Taylor.

Quartet in A Minor, Op. 41, No. 1

ROBERT SCHUMANN

Schumann tended to compose works in clusters, writing mostly piano music until 1840, the year of his marriage to Clara Wieck, which inspired a flood of songs. In 1842, he turned to chamber music, producing all three of his quartets in June and July of that year. He admired the Opus 44 quartets of Mendelssohn, which had been written four years before, and he dedicated his own set of quartets to Mendelssohn. But Schumann pre-

pared himself for composing by studying the quartets of Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven. He began the A-minor quartet on June 4, and on June 8 wrote in his day-book that it was "fairly complete." He began his second quartet on June 11.

The contrapuntal *Andante espressivo* which begins the work was composed after the following *Allegro*. Since the *Allegro* starts in F major, the introduction is necessary to establish the A-minor tonality. The *Allegro* begins with a flowing melody in six-eight time, which is eventually broken by a three-note rhythmic motif that punctuates duets between shifting pairs of instruments. The development takes these motifs through a number of modulations before recapitulating the opening material.

The second movement is a scherzo, a *Presto* in A minor whose light patter at first recalls some characteristic passages of Mendelssohn; but the theme also gets more forceful treatment. The middle section, *Intermezzo*, is in a contrasting, smoother vein.

The *Adagio*, after some introductory flourishes on the cello and violin, settles into a lush, romantic song in F major. The rather pianistic accompaniment figures in the viola soon take on a more important role, leading to a statement of the melody by the cello. The more agitated middle section has touches that recall Beethoven's quartet writing.

The finale, another A-minor *Presto*, is in sonata form, but is dominated by the opening motif, two short notes followed by a higher and longer note and a descending run. Hurried runs of broken thirds move the piece

along through inversions and modulations of the main motif until near the end, when the tempo changes unexpectedly, and the broken thirds are transformed into a pastoral tune played over a droning pedal. Soft whole-note chords lead to a coda which brings back the original tempo and theme.

Program notes by Edward Doughtie.

Pacifica Quartet

Heralded as one of today's most dynamic and exciting young string quartets, the Pacifica Quartet has quickly built an enviable reputation for its brilliant ensemble work and exuberant and impassioned interpretations. Formed in 1994, the quartet has captured three of the nation's most important awards: the 1998 Naumburg Chamber Music Award, top prize at the 1997 Concert Artists Guild Competition, and Grand Prize at the 1996 Coleman Chamber Music Competition. In addition to touring important cities in the United States and Canada, the quartet has played in Australia, Greece, and Panama. They have been heard on National Public Radio's "Performance Today" and "St. Paul Sunday," and were "Quartet in Residence" at NPR headquarters in Washington, where they presented a series of live broadcasts. They have participated in a number of festivals, including those at Aspen and Santa Fe.

The Pacifica is a leading advocate of contemporary music. In the 1999-2000 season alone, eight new string quartets were written for the Pacifica. As resident string quartet

HOUSTON FRIENDS OF MUSIC PROGRAM NOTES

for the Contemporary Chamber Players, the quartet presents a series of concerts devoted exclusively to new music each year.

In 1995, the Pacifica Quartet relocated from Los Angeles to Chicago, and in 1998 was appointed the first Quartet in Residence at the University of Chicago. They have also served as Quartet in Residence at the Music Institute of Chicago, where they created a program for performances and teacher training in four inner-city elementary schools.

Simin Ganatra plays a violin made by Hendrik Jacobs in Amsterdam in 1695; Sibbi Bernhardsson's violin was made by Januarius Gagliano in Naples in 1760; Kathryn Lockwood plays a 1690 viola made in Brussels by Gaspar Borbon; and Brandon Vamos plays a Gasparo da Salo cello made in Brescia around 1580.

THE PACIFICA QUARTET

WILL CONDUCT

A MASTER CLASS AT

MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL

ON TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7,

AT 11:45 A.M.

For more information on Houston Friends of Music programs please visit our website at www.rice.edu/friends

NEXT PROGRAM

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2000

STUDE CONCERT HALL, 8:00 P.M.

Eroica Trio

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Piano Trio in C Minor, Op. 1, No. 3

BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ

Cinq Pièces Brèves

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

*Piano Trio in F Minor, Op. 65*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.