

# *Eroica Trio*

ADELA PEÑA, VIOLIN

ERIKA NICKRENZ, PIANO

SARA SANT'AMBROGIO, CELLO

TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 2004

## — PROGRAM —

### *Trio in B-flat Major, Op. 11*

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Allegro con brio

Adagio

Allegretto con variazioni

### *Trio No. 2 in E Minor, Op. 67*

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)

Andante – Moderato

Allegro non troppo

Largo

Allegretto – Adagio

## — INTERMISSION —

### *Trio in E Minor, Op. 90, "Dumky"*

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)

Lento maestoso – Allegro quasi doppio movimento

Poco adagio – Vivace, ma non troppo

Andante – Vivace non troppo – Andante – Allegretto

Andante moderato – Allegretto scherzando

Allegro

Lento maestoso – Vivace

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

*Piano Trio in B-flat Major, Op. 11*

In October 1797, Joseph Weigl's comic opera, *L'amor marinaro* (*The Corsair*), was performed in Vienna. One of the songs from the opera, "Pria ch'io l'impegno" ("Before What I Intended"), became popular and was on everyone's lips. Several composers of the time seized the opportunity to write sets of variations on this song. Young Beethoven also joined in, writing a set of variations on Weigl's song in the last movement of his *Trio in B-Flat Major, Op. 11*. The song itself is heard note-for-note only in the ninth variation, and is presented in canonic form. All of the other variations are composed quite freely.

Very few historical facts are known about this trio. It was originally written in 1798 for clarinet, cello and piano and was probably intended for the clarinet virtuoso, Joseph Beer. Beethoven himself then transcribed it for violin, cello and piano in order to broaden its appeal.

There are only three movements—the usual *scherzo* movement being omitted. The first movement contains two themes, separated by two powerful chords. The development is fairly short. In the recapitulation Beethoven teases the listener with several false endings before the real conclusion occurs.

The *Adagio* introduces an operatic-like melody in the cello. Each instrument takes a turn, resulting in the rhapsodic nature of the movement.

The final movement contains the nine variations on Weigl's theme. At the conclusion of the ninth variation there is a surprise *Allegro* that converts the theme into a syncopated 6/8 meter. A short flashy coda completes the work.

*Program note* © Margaret Bragg, 2004

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)

*Piano Trio No. 2 in E Minor, Op. 67 (1944)*

Shostakovich dedicated his *Piano Trio No. 2* to his friend Ivan Sollertinsky, in the anguished aftermath of his unexpected and untimely death. The year was 1944; World War II was coming to a close; Shostakovich was teaching at the Moscow Conservatory where, to his great joy, his friend was to have joined him, on the musicology faculty. Sollertinsky was a few years older, brilliant, ebullient, and vastly educated. They had become inseparable friends in their early twenties; it was he who introduced Shostakovich to the music of Bruckner and Mahler, and it was he, who over the years, had been his loyal supporter, promoter and confidante.

The first movement of the *Trio* opens with subdued harmonics high on the cello, in a mood of stark, hushed grief. Fragments of Russian folk tunes make an appearance, fol-



lowed by a lighter mood, perhaps in memory of the jolly times the friends shared in their youth.

The second movement is a sardonic *scherzo* characteristic of Shostakovich. Its instructions, "*marcatissimo, pesante*" (extremely accented and heavy) seem intended to burlesque a clumsy peasant dance, a method Shostakovich repeatedly used, seemingly to deride Stalin's anti-intellectual directives. The third movement is a grim *pas-sacaglia*, a funeral march, formed by a progression of eight tortured chords repeated under six variations. In key and timbre this movement gives a hint of the subdued sections of the *Finale* to Mahler's *Ninth Symphony*, perhaps a quiet homage to Sollertinsky's musical tutelage. The concluding *Allegretto* is famous for its distorted, allegorical use of Jewish klezmer music intended as a directly programmatic image of the horrific stories then making their way into the Soviet press of SS guards forcing their victims to dance beside their own graves. This deliberately crude representation of Jewish village music (the "dance of death" theme later incorporated into his *Eighth Quartet*) casts an eerie and macabre pall; it is chilling even if one does not recognize the folk reference; it is a musical tribute to the martyrdom of these particular victims and by extension, to all those slaughtered during the war, and the untold thousands who had succumbed to the brutality and hardships of life under Stalin.

The coda sums up what can be heard as a tragic drama in four acts: the funeral music of the third movement returns, followed by the opening lament, intertwined with the graveside dance before the music fades away... Only the *Scherzo*—lambasting the crudity of Soviet life—is omitted from this accounting.

Shostakovich worked under terrifying conditions. Men of absolute power and ruthlessness attacked their own citizens in one of the greatest villainies ever perpetrated by a leadership upon its people. Yet, more than any other Soviet composer, Shostakovich stood his ground, albeit in fear and trembling, fighting back with music impregnated with a subtext of protest, of which he said, "he who has ears will hear."

*Program note* © Nora Avins Klein, July, 2003

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)

*Trio in E Minor, Op. 90, "Dumky" (1891)*

"Where does he get all those ideas!," Brahms is once supposed to have exclaimed of Dvořák and his compositions. Anyone who hears Dvořák's *Dumky Trio* will have no trouble in sharing Brahms' admiration at the incredible richness of the Czech composer's imagination. Written in 1890, when Dvořák was at the height of his powers and just about to travel to America to accept the invitation to head the New York

Conservatory of Music for several years, the *Dumky Trio* is nevertheless a work far from traditional European-German art form that secured his fame.

Instead of three or four movements in the accepted vehicles of serious musical expression—sonata-allegro form, slow movement in ABA or variation form, minuet and trio or *scherzo*, and a concluding rondo or another sonata-allegro—this trio consists in a string of six *Dumky* (sing. *Dumka*), a form of folk ballad which came to Czechoslovakia straight from the Ukraine. *Dumky* were sung laments, which were transformed by Slavic composers into melancholy instrumental pieces. In Dvořák's hands, the *Dumka*, slow, ornamented, highly expressive, and usually in a minor key, was allied to a more lively section, frequently in a major key. Although Dvořák had used the *Dumka* in a number of pieces before 1890, nothing in those works approaches the commitment he made to Slavic culture by writing the *Dumky Trio*. He took a big risk. Already suffering from a German chauvinism which looked upon his work with condescension and sometimes led to the refusal to play his music in Berlin or Vienna, Dvořák may well have expected this trio to experience rough sailing. But it is clear that the work was especially dear to his heart. Before leaving for the United States, Dvořák went on a forty-concert tour throughout Bohemia and Moravia, playing the *Dumky Trio* on every program (he must have been quite a decent pianist). He championed the piece in ensuing years, invariably suggesting it for programs in which he was involved. Even a brief look at the *Dumky Trio* reveals its richness. In addition to the most soulful and lush melodic lines, Dvořák gives us an enormous array of dynamic contrasts, brilliant instrumentation, and the skillful use of the variety and combinations of sonorities each instrument is capable of, so that the three instruments alternately complement and contrast with each other. Six pieces in similar form—and yet one is engaged throughout. It is a remarkable achievement.

The music presents special difficulties in ensemble playing. There are probably more changes of tempo in this one work than in a whole volume of Haydn string quartets. The performers not only have to steep themselves in the national style of the *Dumka*, they have to do so together. They, and listeners of the work, are well rewarded for their efforts, however. Brahms once wrote to their mutual publisher, in recommending some quartets of Dvořák's for publication, "The best that a musician must have, Dvořák has." One hundred years later, we have to agree.

*Program note* © Styra Avins, November, 1999.

*Styra Avins is the author of the recently published book,*

*Brahms, Life and Letters, Oxford University Press, 1997.*



## Eroica Trio

Audiences around the world respond with standing ovations to what critics call the "gusto" and "heart stopping mastery" of the Grammy-nominated Eroica Trio. Whether they are playing the great standards of the piano trio repertoire or daring contemporary works, the three young women who make up this world-class chamber ensemble electrify the concert stage with their combination of technical virtuosity, vivid artistic interpretation, and contagious exuberance in performance. The Trio won the prestigious 1991 Naumburg Award, resulting in an acclaimed Lincoln Center Debut, and has since toured the United States, Europe, and Asia. While maintaining this demanding concert schedule, the Eroica has released five celebrated recordings for Angel/EMI Classics Records, garnering multiple Grammy nominations.

Highlights of the 2003-2004 season include tours of the United States with the Prague Chamber Orchestra and Cincinnati Symphony performing the Beethoven *Triple Concerto*; the release of the Trio's sixth recording for Angel/EMI, and the world premiere of a new work composed for the Trio by composer-violinist Mark O'Connor at Montalvo Center for the Performing Arts in Saratoga, California. The Trio continues to perform recitals throughout the United States.

Immediately following its acclaimed Carnegie Hall debut in 1997, the Eroica Trio was offered an exclusive five-record contract by Angel/EMI Classics Records. This contract was extended in 2002 to include three additional recordings. The Trio's sixth EMI recording, the Beethoven *Triple Concerto* with the Prague Chamber Orchestra, was released in October 2003, just prior to their four-week tour of the United States with this celebrated chamber orchestra.

The Eroica Trio has appeared on numerous television programs. A special documentary, "Eroica!" aired on the PBS series *Independent Lens* in December, 2003. The group has been featured in many magazines including *Elle*, *Vanity Fair*, *Bon Appétit*, *Time Out New York*, *Chamber Music* and *Strad*.

Grand Marnier created a new cocktail dubbed *The Eroica*, unveiled for the release of the "Pasión" recording in October, 2000. Chateau Sainte Michelle, a vineyard in Seattle, also named one of their vintage Rieslings in honor of the Trio.

The women who make up the Eroica Trio are all top-ranked, award-winning soloists and have performed on many of the world's great stages. The group's members share a unique history, having known each other since childhood. The trio is based in New York City where its members maintain a close musical and personal friendship.

Visit Eroica Trio @ [www.eroicatrio.com](http://www.eroicatrio.com)

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