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Concert: Verdehr Trio

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VERDEHR TRIO

Walter Verdehr, violin
Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr, clarinet
Gary Kirkpatrick, piano

CREATURES OF PROMETHEUS, op. 43
No. 14 Andante and Allegretto

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

EIGHT PIECES FOR CLARINET, VIOLA AND PIANO, op. 83
Max Bruch
(1838-1920)
transcribed by Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr

VI. Nachtgesang: Andante con moto (Nocturn)
IV. Allegro agitato

A TRIO SETTING (1990)

Fast and Explosive
Slow and Dreamy
Allegretto; Scherzando e Leggiero

Gunther Schuller
(b. 1925)

INTERMISSION

SONATA A TRE (1982)

Con intensità
Con sensitivitá
Con velocitá

Karel Husa
(b. 1921)

SLAVONIC DANCES

Antonin Dvořák
(1841-1904)

Tempo di Menuetto, op. 46, no. 2
Allegretto grazioso, op. 72, no. 2
Presto, op. 46, no. 8

Walter Ford Hall Auditorium
Friday, February 22, 1991
8:15 p.m.
Ludwig van Beethoven. *Creatures of Prometheus, op. 43*

The *Andante and Allegretto*, op. 43, no. 14 by Beethoven is taken from the ballet *Creatures of Prometheus*, op. 43. Written in 1800-1801, it was Beethoven's introduction to the Viennese stage and the first performance was given in the Burgtheater in Vienna on March 28, 1801. The ballet consists of an overture, introduction and sixteen numbers. Number 14 was originally scored for oboe and bassett horn with orchestra and has been arranged for violin, clarinet and piano by the Verdehr Trio.

Max Bruch. *Eight Pieces for Clarinet, Viola and Piano*, op. 83

Max Bruch is remembered today chiefly for his concertos and concerto-like compositions, particularly the G Minor concerto and *Scottish Fantasy for Violin and Orchestra* as well as the *Kol Nidrei Variations for Cello and Orchestra*. Among his chamber works are string quartets, quintets and an octet, as well as the *Eight Pieces*, op. 83. Wilhelm Altmann, the famous chamber music authority, has written that Bruch's chamber works "are one and all distinguished by beauty of tone and musical architecture." Further, concerning the op. 83 *Eight Pieces* he enthuses, "How nobly inspired are the melodies that he produced this late in life; how masterly his development of them and how effective his handling of each individual instrument."

The op. 83 pieces were originally written for clarinet, viola and piano and first performed in 1909 in Cologne and Hamburg with Bruch's son, Max Felix, playing the clarinet part. Bruch also scored the pieces for violin, viola and piano as well as for clarinet, cello and piano. The violin, clarinet and piano combination is yet another viable alternative since each different instrumentation imparts its own subtle and characteristic flavor to these lovely late Romantic pieces.

Gunther Schuller. *A Trio Setting*

Gunther Schuller (born 1925, New York City) has developed a musical career that ranges from composer and conductor to educator, administrator, music publisher and record producer. At the age of seventeen he was principal French hornist with the Cincinnati Symphony and two years later was appointed to a similar position with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. In 1959 he gave up performing to devote his time primarily to composition. He has received commissions from major orchestras throughout the world and, since 1980, has
been a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Among other awards, he has received two Guggenheim Fellowships, the Darius Milhaud Award, the Rodgers and Hammerstein Award and numerous honorary degrees. He was the 1989 recipient of Columbia University's William Schuman Award for lifetime achievement in American music composition.

As a conductor, Mr. Schuller travels throughout the world, leading major ensembles. As an educator, he has taught at the Manhattan School of Music and Yale University, and served as head of the composition department at the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood for 1963 until 1984. During the last fourteen years he was the Center's Artistic Director. In 1967 he was appointed President of the New England Conservatory of Music, Boston, where he remained until 1977. During that time he reintroduced the music of Scott Joplin and developed the New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble. Since 1984 he has been Artistic Director of the Festival at Sandpoint, Idaho. Schuller has written dozens of essays and four books, the most recent of which is *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz-1930-1945*.

The first movement of *A Trio Setting*, marked "fast and explosive" is a virtuoso *tour de force*, primarily for the clarinet, although by and by, the other two instruments join in the merry chase. The first clarinet run is like the shot of an arrow, and it never stops flying in a kind of headlong perpetual motion, traversing a few jazz "licks" along the way.

The second movement—"slow and dreamy"—has lazily moving figures (like quietly-moving clouds in the sky on a calm day) set against rich, floating piano harmonies. A sudden brief climax subsides as quickly as it arose. A series of breezy cadenzas for each instrument brings the movement to a calm close.

A scherzo follows, rhythmically complex, but nonetheless mostly light and airy. Eventually the music's energy is spent leading to a calmer middle section (*Andante*). Here the clarinet sings sweetly over soft accompanying piano chords. The scherzando mood is recapitulated briefly and the movement ends surprisingly and abruptly.

Strong leaping figures initiate the last movement, undoubtedly the structurally densest music in the entire work. But this music, too, is soon becalmed, and a slow *cantabile* episode (in 6/4), with wide arching figures in the clarinet and violin, takes over. However, a return to the initial *agitato* music restores the finale's true character, the movement—and the piece—ending in a dramatic burst of sound and fury.

My Trio for clarinet, violin and piano is in four contrasting movements, formally retaining the quite traditional classic sequence of fast-slow-scherzo-fast. This reflects my strong belief that the old classic and romantic forms are far from exhausted and obsolete, as many avant-gardists in recent decades have tried to make us believe. They are as appropriate today as they were 100 years ago, even when filled with the more rhythmically and chromatically complex tonal language of today. It is also important that the *contrasts* of mood and character
inherent in the classic symphonic forms—say, in a Mozart or Beethoven symphony—be reestablished, for we have had in the last 50 years too many multi-movement pieces in which, alas, every movement—whether marked Adagio or Presto—sounds alike.

Gunther Schuller

Karel Husa. *Sonata a Tre*

Karel Husa was born in Prague and was a student at the Conservatory and Academy of Music. He later lived in Paris while studying with Honegger and Boulanger. Presently Professor of Composition at Cornell University, he is one of the most often-performed and well-known composers in the United States and his dual career as composer and conductor carries him throughout the United States and Europe. He is the recipient of numerous prizes and honors among which are a Pulitzer Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a UNESCO award and the Czechoslovakia Academy for Arts and Sciences prize. Among many commissions he has received are ones from the Koussevitsky Foundation and the New York Philharmonic. In the spring of 1987, Mr. Husa retired from Ithaca College and received an honorary doctorate from the institution. The position of Karel Husa Visiting Professor of Composition was initiated in fall 1987 and has attracted such world famous composers as Joseph Schwantner, John Corigliano, Joan Tower, and William Bolcom.

*Sonata a Tre* was commissioned by the Verdehr Trio, in residence at Michigan State University. It was composed in Ithaca, New York, during late 1981 and early 1982 and received its world premiere in Hong Kong in March, 1982. Written in three movements, the work features each performer in one movement. The violin opens in a solo preludium followed by a toccata-like conclusion. The second movement features the piano in a slow fantasia leading into elegiac music. The third movement begins with a clarinet cadenza and later the violin and piano join in a fast finale.

The title "Sonata" refers not to the "classical" meaning of the sonata but rather to the earlier Baroque meaning of the word. The music, however, is part of today's world as new possibilities of techniques (individual and collective) have been used and new sounds explored. *Sonata a Tre* is written in a virtuostic manner and, hopefully, for the excitement for solo and chamber music making. It is dedicated to the Verdehr Trio.

Karel Husa

Antonín Dvořák. *Slavonic Dances*

Following the appearance of the *Slavonic Dances*, op. 46, Dvořák's international reputation was firmly established. Prior to that time, he was relatively unknown outside his native Czech homeland. It was Johannes Brahms who called his publisher, Fritz Simrock of Berlin, to the attention of this
"decidedly talented person, and besides that, a poor man!" Dvořák's first important success came at age thirty-four, when Simrock published his *Airs From Moravia* in 1878. Pleased with their collaboration, and undoubtedly inspired by the enormous popularity of Brahms' own *Hungarian Dances*, Simrock asked Dvořák to write a set of Czech dances. The piano duet version of the first eight dances, op. 46, was completed between March 18th and May 7th, 1878, and orchestrated by August 22nd. A triumphant (and lucrative) success, Simrock urged Dvořák to write yet another set. The composer at first hesitated—"to do the same thing twice is devilish difficult!" However, in the summer of 1886, between June 4th and July 9th, he composed op. 72, eight more dances for piano duet.

Unlike Brahms, Dvořák "did not imitate folk tunes, he created in the spirit of them," wrote Alec Robertson. Karel Hoffmeister suggests that: "They [the Dances] spring directly from the soul of the people." They also spring more from the soul of Dvořák who brilliantly stylized the folk music of his native land. Creating original melodies, he drew inspiration and direction from the wealth of influences of his childhood days in a Bohemian village.

Immediately engaging and irresistible to enjoy, these *Slavonic Dances* are best described by Dvořák himself: "They will bring the house down . . . they sound like the very Devil!"

Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr
THE ARTISTS

In recent years the Verdehr Trio has created a new repertoire of over 60 works for the violin-clarinet-piano combination. They have rediscovered and reworked eighteenth and nineteenth century works as well as commissioning new works from some of today's most exciting international composers: Leslie Bassett, Karel Husa, Ned Rorem, Gunther Schuller and Alan Hovhaness from the United States; Peter Dickinson and Thea Musgrave from Great Britain; Thomas Christian David from Austria and Ida Gotkovsky from France. Some newly-commissioned composers include William Bolcom, Gian Carlo Menotti, Edison Dennisow, Peter Sculthorpe, Stanislaw Skrowaczewski and Lukas Foss.

The Trio has performed in 13 European countries including the Soviet Union as well as in more than half of the United States. Biennial world tours have taken them to South and Central America, Australia and Asia, including three tours of China, India and Pakistan. The Trio has been featured on ABC Australia, Singapore and Hong Kong Radio, Sudwest Rundfunk in Germany, Austrian National Radio and National Public Radio in the United States.

The Verdehr Trio is in residence at Michigan State University; Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr formerly served on the Ithaca College faculty 1960-62. Funding and assistance for commissioning new works and recording them has been received from Michigan State University, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Michigan Council for the Arts.

Recordings by the Verdehr Trio:

LP Works by Jere Hutcheson and Thomas Christian David, S644, Crystal Records
Works by Joseph Haydn and Karel Husa, S648, Crystal Records
Works by Don Freund and Thomas Christian David, (Duo), LPI 122 Stereo, Leonarda Records
Triple Concerto, Thomas Christian David, Tonkunstler Orchestra, Amadeo, 423-733-1

CD Works by Bassett, Bruch, Hoag and Hoover, LE 326, Leonaarda Records
Soon to be released on Crystal Records: "The Making of a Medium"
Vol. 1: Works of Mozart, Hovhaness, Frescobaldi, Pasatieri and Bartok;

Management: Rohr Artist's Management
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CONCERT CALENDAR

FEBRUARY
24 3:00 Faculty Recital, Angus Godwin, Baritone
25 8:15 Faculty Recital, Ronald Caravan, Clarinet and Saxophone
26 8:15 Concert Band, Mark Fonder, Conductor
     Chorus, Andrew Housholder, Conductor
28 8:15 Women's Chorale, Susan Conkling, Conductor
     Symphonic Band, Henry Neubert, Conductor

MARCH
2 8:15 Orchestra, Charles Peltz, Conductor
3 3:00 Choir, Lawrence Doepler, Conductor
3 8:15 Faculty Recital, music for two pianos and percussion
6 8:15 Faculty Chamber Music Series
     Ithaca Wind Quintet
7 12:00 Guest Recital, Joe Alessi, Trombone
7 8:15 Vocal Jazz Ensemble, Dave Riley, Director/Arranger
18 8:15 Faculty Recital, Theodore Rounds, Percussion
20 8:15 Horn Choir, John Covert, Conductor
     Trombone Troupe, Harold Reynolds, Conductor
21 8:15 Ithaca College Concerts 1990-91*
     KING'S SINGERS
23 8:15 Guest Recital, Frederick Hemke, Saxophone

In addition to the concerts listed above, music students give solo and chamber recitals, which are free and open to the public. The Concert Line (274-3356) provides supplemental information about these performances.

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ITHACA COLLEGE CONCERTS 1990-91*

September 7  Empire Brass
October 11  Sergio and Odair Assad
February 22  Verdehr Trio
March 21  King’s Singers

*admission charge