

B I R M I N G H A M

Chamber Music Society

presents

The Peabody Trio



Brock Recital Hall • Samford University
April 22, 2013

*This concert is dedicated to Anita Ranelli in recognition of her leadership and
service to the Birmingham Chamber Music Society*

Program

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Trio in E-flat major, Op. 70, No. 2 (1808)

Poco sostenuto – Allegro ma non troppo

Allegretto

Allegretto ma non troppo

Finale: Allegro

FRED LERDAHL (1943-)

Times 3 (2012)

Ratios

Cycles

Phases

❧ *Intermission* ❧

SHULAMIT RAN (1949-)

Soliloquy (1997)

FRANZ SHUBERT (1797-1828)

Trio No. 1 in B-flat major, D. 898 (1826)

Allegro moderato

Andante un poco mosso

Scherzo: Allegro

Rondo: Allegro vivace

The Peabody Trio

Violaine Melançon, violin • Natasha Brofsky, cello
Seth Knopp, piano

Since winning the prestigious Naumburg Chamber Music Award in 1989, The Peabody Trio has established itself as an important presence in the chamber music world as vivid interpreters of the classics of the repertoire, advocates for new music, and dedicated teachers and mentors to a generation of young musicians. They bring to their music making what The Washington Post calls “the romantic fervor of the 20th century greats.”

The Peabody Trio gave its New York debut in 1990 at Alice Tully Hall and has since performed in the most important chamber music series in North America, including New York, Washington, Chicago, Denver, Vancouver, Montreal, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego. Internationally, they tour frequently in England, making repeat appearances at London’s Wigmore Hall, and in Japan and Israel. Their reputation as champions of new music garnered them an invitation to the first Biennale for contemporary music, *Tempus Fugit*, in Tel Aviv.

Festivals including Tanglewood, Skaneateles, Cape and Islands, and Rockport have played home to their summer performances. Their radio broadcasts include performances on Saint Paul Sunday Morning, Performance Today, Morning Pro Musica, CBC, Radio-Canada, WGBH in Boston, and WQXR in New York. The Peabody Trio collaborates frequently with such eminent artists as clarinetist Charles Neidich, violists Roger Tapping and Maria Lambros, soprano Phyllis Bryn-Julson, baritone William Sharp, and actor Andre De Shields. Working with Walter van Dyk and Elizabeth Mansfield, The Peabody Trio is at the forefront of chamber music theater with a series of innovative, collaborative projects involving piano trio and actor.

The Peabody Trio currently serves as the resident faculty ensemble of the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, a position they have held since 1989. They are frequently asked to perform educational residencies for chamber music organizations and have served as visiting professors at universities and conservatories both in the United States and abroad. They spend summers as ensemble-in-residence at the Yellow Barn Music School and Festival in Putney, Vermont.

The Peabody Trio celebrated its twentieth season in 2007-08 with the release of the Beethoven trios *Opus 1, Nos. 1 and 3* on Artek Records. The recording was hailed by Gramophone as “bold, flexible and vibrant,” while *The Baltimore Sun* praised its “vibrancy and expressive flair.” In 2004 the trio released the Beethoven *Opus 70 Trios*, which won acclaim from *Strad Magazine* as “some of the most accomplished Beethoven *Trio* playing ... heard in many a year.” Previously they have recorded for New World Records and CRI.

Violaine Melançon, on the violin and chamber music faculties of the Peabody Conservatory, is deeply dedicated to the range of violin and chamber music repertoire and has a special affection for the music of today. Israeli composer Shulamit Ran wrote a violin concerto for her and she has premiered several works by other leading composers. During the spring of 2012, she presented the complete works for solo violin by J.S. Bach, a project which will continue for the next few years.

Ms. Melançon is from Quebec, Canada. After receiving First Prize in violin at the Conservatoire de Musique, she continued her studies with Ivan Galamian at the Curtis Institute of Music, with Isadore Tinkleman at the San Francisco Conservatory and with Arthur Grumiaux in Belgium. While at Curtis, she was a member of the Nisaika Quartet, prize winner of the 8th International String Quartet competition in Evian, France. Ms. Melançon is also the recipient of many awards for solo performance including the 1984 Prix d'Europe. In 1983, she formed the Knopp-Melançon Duo, which was appointed USIA Artistic Ambassadors in 1987, toured abroad extensively and made their Washington, D.C., debut at the Kennedy Center. Since then, her activities as a chamber musician, soloist with orchestras, and teacher have taken her to major music centers in United States, Canada, Europe, the Middle East, and Japan. During the summer, she serves on the faculty of the Yellow Barn Music School and Festival.

Natasha Brofsky has enjoyed a career in both the United States and Europe. In addition to her work with the Peabody Trio, Ms. Brofsky has performed as guest with numerous ensembles, including the Takács, Prazak, Norwegian, Borromeo, Jupiter, and Ying Quartets. During nearly a decade in Europe, Ms. Brofsky held principal positions in the Norwegian Radio Orchestra and the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra under Iona Brown. In addition she was a member of the Serapion Ensemble, performing with them in Germany and Austria, and the string trio, Opus 3, which performed throughout Norway. She recorded Olav Anton Thommessen's concerto for cello and winds for Aurora Records and was a regular participant at Open Chamber Music in Prussia Cove, England.

A sought after teacher, Ms. Brofsky serves on the cello faculties of the New England Conservatory and the Juilliard School. Since 2001, she has been on the faculty at the Yellow Barn Festival in Vermont. She was previously on the faculty of the Barratt-Due Musikk Institutt in Oslo, Norway and she has given master classes at many colleges and conservatories in the U.S. and abroad, including for El Sistema in Venezuela. She will give a featured master class at the 2013 American String Teachers Association National Conference.

Seth Knopp is a founding member of the Peabody Trio and serves on the piano and chamber music faculties of the Peabody Conservatory where the trio has been ensemble-in-residence since 1987. In 2000 he was named Artistic Director of the Yellow Barn Music School and Festival, an international gathering of artists who meet each summer to explore the vast riches of the chamber music repertoire. Mr. Knopp studied at the New England Conservatory with Leonard Shure; at the San Francisco Conservatory, where he studied with Nathan Schwartz; and with Leon Fleisher. In 1983, Mr. Knopp met violinist Violaine Melançon, forming the Knopp-Melançon Duo, an artistic collaboration which would eventually expand to become the Peabody Trio. In 1987, as a result of having been appointed USIA Artistic Ambassadors, the duo made their Washington, D.C., debut at the Kennedy Center and subsequently toured throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, Japan and Egypt. Since 2010 he has been curator of Soundings, a concert series presented at the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas, Texas, drawing on the relationship between musical traditions and innovation, and the unique lens through which music helps us to better understand the world.

Program Notes

Ludwig van Beethoven Trio in E-flat major, Op. 70, No. 2 (1808)

Comparisons may be odious, but they are surely inevitable vis-à-vis the two piano trios we are to hear tonight. This is especially true when we consider that the two works were written in Vienna within a twenty year span by two of the world's greatest composers, offering many opportunities to compare and contrast the styles of two musical titans. Both were written when the composers were about the same age, both are genial works, and both contain harmonic and structural innovations. Yet neither could be mistaken for the work of the other, for they belong unmistakably to their creators.

Beethoven's *Op. 70, No. 2* and its counterpart, the *Op. 70, No. 1* (or "*Ghost*" *Trio*) were dedicated to Countess Maria von Erdody, in whose Viennese apartment Beethoven had been given rooms. He gave their first performance in December, 1808 in her salon. These were not his first attempts at the genre. Indeed his first published works were three piano trios, *Op. 1* and yet to come was the famous "*Archduke*" *Trio, Op. 97*, which appeared in 1811. The years of *Op. 70* and *97* were not the easiest for Beethoven. In this so-called Middle Period, he was struggling with the onset of deafness. Nonetheless, the year of *Op. 70* was a fruitful one, producing the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, among other works.

Though the "*Ghost*" *Trio* may reflect some of Beethoven's inner torment, its companion, *Op. 70, No. 2* is generally sunny in mood, barring its slow, Haydn-esque opening, and it reveals the lyrical Beethoven. Its third movement, marked *Allegretto ma non troppo* (some feel this signifies a slow *Allegretto*) contains a theme resembling one from the *Opus 26* piano sonata. The last movement incorporates harmonic innovation, with the composer exploiting his beloved "third relation", involving modulation by thirds rather than the more classic fifths.

Dr. Patricia Fitzsimmons

Fred Lerdahl • Times 3 (2012)

Composer Fred Lerdahl studied at Lawrence University, Princeton, and Tanglewood. He has taught at the University of California-Berkeley, Harvard, and Michigan, and since 1991 has been Fritz Reiner Professor of Music at Columbia University. A member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, he has thrice been finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in music. Other honors are the Koussevitzky Composition Prize, Guggenheim Fellowship, and Classical Recording Foundation's Composer of the Year Award. His commissions include the Fromm Foundation, Koussevitzky Foundation, Spoleto Festival, National Endowment for the Arts, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Library of Congress, Chamber Music America, and others. Among the organizations performing his works are the New York Philharmonic, Pittsburgh Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, American Composers Orchestra, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Orpheus, Bos-

ton Symphony Chamber Players, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, eighth blackbird, Speculum Musicae, Collage, Antares, Juilliard Quartet, Pro Arte Quartet, Daedalus Quartet, Ensemble XXI, Lontano, and the Venice Biennale. He has been in residence at the Marlboro Music Festival, IRCAM, the Wellesley Composers Conference, the American Academy in Rome, the Bowdoin Summer Music Festival, the Yellow Barn Music Festival, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, and the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. A prominent music theorist, Lerdahl has written two books, *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music* (with linguist Ray Jackendoff) and *Tonal Pitch Space*, both of which model musical listening from the perspective of cognitive science.

About this composition, Lerdahl wrote:

Times 3 (2012) for violin, cello, and piano, was composed for the Peabody Trio with the generous support of Charles and Jessie Price. The piece lasts about 19 minutes. The title refers to three instruments, three movements, and three ways of treating musical time. The tone of the work is serious yet as playful as the title suggests.

The first movement, *Ratios*, opens with a series of seemingly unrelated ideas in tempo ratios of 3:2 and 4:3. As the movement proceeds, the ideas develop, transform, and superimpose in increasingly wide spirals. The slower second movement, *Cycles*, is a fantasy built on the strict scaffolding of an omnipresent, diatonic cantus firmus, set in symmetrically expanding and contracting cycles. The quick finale, *Phases*, is a *moto perpetuo tarantella* in which the instruments move in and out of phase as they chase one another. The flowing eighth notes merge and finally unify ideas from the previous movements.

Shulamit Ran • Soliloquy (1997)

Shulamit Ran began composing songs to Hebrew poetry at the age of seven in her native Israel. By nine she was studying composition and piano with some of Israel's most noted musicians. She left Israel at 14 to continue her piano and composition studies in the U.S.

Ms. Ran considers Beethoven as her "compositional idol" and her music has been played by many of the world's leading orchestras. She has received numerous awards, fellowships and commissions, including a Pulitzer Prize in Music in 1991.

Ran, who formerly performed extensively as a pianist in the U.S., Europe, Israel and elsewhere, is presently the Andrew MacLeish Distinguished Service Professor in the Department of Music at the University of Chicago, where she has taught since 1973.

In Ran's words:

Soliloquy owes its inspiration in no small part to the experience of being preoccupied from 1995 to 1997 with the creation of my first opera, *Between Two Worlds (The Dybbuk)*, based on S. Ansky's famous Yiddish play by the same name. In 1995, I composed *Yearning* for violin and string orchestra, for Edna Mitchell and the late Yehudi Menuhin based on a fragment of the opera, then in progress, and *Soliloquy* is a recasting of this work, adapted in 1997 for the Peabody Trio.

My compositional point of departure was a musical line that begins the opening soliloquy of Khonnon, the play's (and opera's) protagonist, where his yearning and desire for his beloved Leya is first revealed. While the aforementioned phrase served as the compositional "trigger" for me in *Soliloquy*, its placement in this work differs from its operatic analog in that it appears as the answer (consequent phrase) to *Soliloquy's* principal theme, a newly composed violin line. This legato line is loosely based on a whole-tone configuration, a different melodic permutation of which is associated throughout the opera with Khonnon's desire, and which I have come to think of as the opera's "lust motif."

Franz Schubert Trio No. 1 in B-flat major, D. 898 (1826)

Franz Schubert was both challenged and inspired by Beethoven throughout his compositional career. The looming figure of the older man would cast a shadow over all he wrote. Perhaps only at the end of his all-too-brief life, at about the time this trio was written, did Schubert realize he might be worthy of succeeding his idol. At this point his time ran out. On his deathbed, he requested that a group perform for him the Beethoven *Quartet in C-sharp Minor, Op. 131*. Karl Holz, the first violinist in the group remarked: "The King of Harmony has sent the King of Song a friendly bidding to the crossing."

In the *B-flat Trio* none of the tragedy Schubert was experiencing is evidenced. Robert Schumann said of the work: "One glance at Schubert's *Trio* and the troubles of our human existence disappear and all the world is fresh and bright again."

With all this beauty, there is also harmonic and structural innovation such as we found in the Beethoven: witness the "wrong key" arrivals at the end of the recapitulation of the first movement, the alteration of the final A section in the ABA structure of the second movement and the considerable rewriting of the recurring melodies in the *Rondo* of the final movement. And, as did Beethoven, Schubert may have borrowed from his own material. Alfred Einstein feels that the *Rondo* theme of the final movement may come from an 1815 song, "Skolie", which contains these words: "Let the bright May morning take delight in the brief life of the flower before its fragrance disappears." How sad that the autograph of this work is lost and that, like so much of the composer's output, it was unpublished in his lifetime. How fortunate we are tonight to take delight in two works whose musical appeal has never vanished.

Dr. Patricia Fitzsimmons

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