



IN CONCERT

Classical Music in the Valley

Presents

The Merling Trio

Renata Artman Knific, Violin
Bruce Uchimura, Cello
Susan Wiersma Uchimura, Piano

Sunday, February 17, 2008

Jones Theater
Westcliffe Center for the Performing Arts
Westcliffe, Colorado

The Merling Trio

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Bruce Uchimura, cello

Renata Artman Knific, violin

Piano Trio in B-flat Major, K 502 W. A. Mozart (1756-1791)
Allegro
Larghetto
Alegretto

Las Quatros Estaciones Portenas A. Piazzolla (1921-1992)

INTERMISSION

Piano Trio in B Major J. Brahms (1833-1897)
Allegro con brio
Scherzo: Allegro molto; Meno allegro
Adagio
Allegro

The Merling Trio will perform
for students at the Custer County School
on Monday, February 18.

Gwyn Miller, Page Turner

Enjoy an art exhibit by the Westcliffe Art Guild in Studio Two.

You are invited to meet the performers at a reception following the concert.

PROGRAM NOTES

Mozart: Trio in B-flat Major, K. 502

In its infancy, the piano trio was a domestic entertainment amounting to little more than a piano piece. The strings, while adding to the sonority, contributed little of musical interest: the violin played an accompanying role to the keyboard, while the cello's notes served to reinforce the thin bass of the piano of the time.

But by 1786, when Mozart composed K.502, the piano trio genre was well out of infancy and reaching full maturity. The formerly expendable string parts had gained independence from the piano and moved toward musical equality with it. Technical demands for all the players increased as well, until the trio became what it is today—a staple of the concert hall instead of the parlor.

Mozart's great trios share many characteristics, and you will hear them in K.502. They are large-scale pieces in three movements, fast-slow-fast. With their technical brilliance (particularly for the piano), and a musical style affording them charm and exuberance, they resemble the piano concertos he composed at the same time. The second and third movements of K.502 are a case in point: although the string parts have independence and musical interest of their own, the piano remains in the forefront, introducing the main themes in much the way concerto movements begin. Both movements are rondos, a form which is unified by a recurring main theme, and commonly used in concertos.

Music of Astor Piazzolla

An Argentinian of Italian descent, Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992) was a bandleader and expert player of the bandoneón (a type of accordion) as well as a composer. He was born and died in Buenos Aires, and lived also in New York and Paris. He studied classical music with Alberto Ginastera and Nadia Boulanger.

Piazzolla is best known for his nuevo tango, or “new tango,” a style based upon tango but incorporating many musical idioms, structures, and instruments not associated with the traditional tango. This distinctive style found quick acceptance in the U.S. (where Piazzolla experimented with jazz) and in France, but initially met resistance in his own country. By the 1980s, however, it was popular even in Argentina. Since that time, many of Piazzolla's works (of which there are 750 in all) have achieved widespread popularity among classical and popular musicians alike.

Brahms: Trio in B Major, Op. 8

Brahms completed this trio, his first published chamber work, in 1854, at the age of twenty. Despite the public's initial acceptance of the trio, Brahms began to have misgivings about it soon after releasing it for publication, and wanted to revise it. Finally, in 1889, with the consent of his new publisher, Simrock, Brahms virtually rewrote every movement except the Scherzo. The result is a tauter work that is about one-third shorter than the original and showing all the benefits of another thirty years of experience. Though Brahms permitted the first version to remain in the publisher's catalogue, it is all but forgotten today.

Brahms preserved the broad, powerful main theme of the original first movement, unfolding it gradually with the piano and cello, which are later joined by the violin. Portions of this theme, along with a new second one, are reworked in the development section. The coda re-establishes the relaxed mood of the opening, bringing the music full circle. The excited B-minor Scherzo with its staccato tune, and its partner, the waltz-like trio, were left basically unchanged in Brahms' revision, except for the pianissimo coda.

The Adagio opens with a chorale-like theme in a dialogue between the strings and piano; the middle section is a lovely song for the cello. Finally, in an unusual move, Brahms set the closing Allegro in the minor. The main theme is somewhat ambiguous harmonically, and the second is solidly in D major. Both are developed through several key changes, including B major. But the music returns to the minor at its close.

The Merling Trio



The Merling Trio is recognized as one of today's premier ensembles. A truly international trio, it brings together musicians from Polish, Japanese, and Dutch backgrounds. The Merling Trio has been hailed as a brilliantly distinguished group endowed with remarkable gifts of communication, magnificent precision, and an impeccable blend of sound. The trio made its New York debut in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall in 1993, and was named a finalist for the Naumburg Foundation Chamber Music Award in 1994.

The Merling Trio has given numerous recitals throughout Canada and the United States. Members of the Trio have performed with orchestras such as the English Chamber Orchestra, the Honolulu Symphony, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, the Concerto Soloists of Philadelphia, and the South Carolina Philharmonic, under the baton of such notable conductors as Daniel Barenboim, Simon Rattle, and Christoph Eschenbach. Recent trio performances include concerts for the Chamber Music Society of Charleston (WV), the Texas Friends of Chamber Music Series, the Jewel Box Series at Northeastern Illinois University, and the Columbus (OH) Museum of Art.

Several contemporary composers have written works for the Merling Trio, and in 1993, they commissioned and premiered C. Curtis-Smith's Second Piano Trio. In February 1998, the trio returned to Carnegie Hall for a sold-out performance of a new work by New York composer Terry Winter-Owens, commissioned by the Merling Trio with a Commissioning Grand from the American Composers Forum. In 2003, the trio premiered Frank Proto's Quartet for Piano and Strings at St. John's Smith Square in London, England. Performances by the Merling Trio have been broadcast widely on television and radio, including WNYC, WFMT 98.7 in Chicago, and Peachstate Public Radio. Their first CD, entitled "The Merling Trio performs works of C. Curtis-Smith", was released in 1995 by Albany Records, in collaboration with conductor Dennis Russell Davies. About the CD, Fanfare wrote, "The composer could not ask for better interpreters." The trio's next CD, "Piano Trio Classics," including works by Haydn, Mozart, Brahms, Schumann, and Liszt, was released by Pamplin Records in 2001. Centaur Records released the trio's new recording of works by Piazzolla and Proto in 2006.

In residence at the School of Music at Western Michigan University, members of the trio are also faculty members at the prestigious ENCORE School for Strings, and at the Lancut Festival in Poland. Festival appearances include the Banff Centre for the Arts, the Pensacola Summer Music Festival, the Skaneateles Festival, the Saugatuck Chamber Music Festival, and the Fontana Festival of Art and Music. Recent educational activities include performances and master classes for the California Music Teachers Association, the Music Teachers National Association, the Hawaii International Arts and Humanities Conference, and the American String Teachers Association National Conference.

IN CONCERT: *Classical Music in the Valley* was formed in 2003 to support and promote classical music in the Wet Mountain Valley. The mission of the group is to provide cultural and educational opportunities for residents of the area by presenting an annual series of live classical music performances and youth workshops. **IN CONCERT** is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. Contributions are tax deductible.

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