The University of Chicago Presents | Mandel Hall
Friday, January 31, 2014, 7:30 PM

Goldstein–Peled–Fiterstein Trio

Alon Goldstein, piano
Amit Peled, cello
Alex Fiterstein, clarinet

6:30 PM pre-concert lecture with Philip V. Bohlman, Mary Werkman Distinguished Service Professor of Music and the Humanities in the College

BEETHOVEN Piano Trio in B-flat Major, Op. 11
Allegro con brio
Adagio
Tema con variazioni ("Pria ch'io l'impegno": Allegretto)

LISZT Paraphrase on Verdi's *Aida* (Sacred Dance and Finale Duet) S. 436
Allegretto

DEBUSSY Premiére Rhapsodie

Intermission

KOPYTMAN *Kaddish* for Cello and Piano

BRAHMS Trio for Piano, Clarinet and Cello in A minor, Op. 114
Allegro
Adagio
Andante grazioso
Allegro

Photography is prohibited.

Trio in B-flat Major for Clarinet, Cello, and Piano, Opus 11 (1797)
LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
b. December 16, 1770, Bonn
d. March 26, 1827, Vienna

Beethoven wrote this gentle trio in 1798, during his first years in Vienna. Much of his early chamber music included piano, perhaps to give Beethoven more opportunities to perform in his adopted city. This particular combination of

instruments is unusual, and Beethoven may have written it with the Austrian clarinet virtuoso Joseph Beer in mind (almost exactly a century later, Brahms would write a trio using these same three instruments for the German clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld; that work concludes this program). Aware that this combination of instruments might mean infrequent performances, Beethoven also prepared a version in which violin replaces the clarinet.

The *Allegro con brio* opens with a jaunty unison statement four octaves deep. The music seems so innocent and straightforward that it is easy to overlook Beethoven's harmonic surprises: when the second theme arrives, it is in the unexpected key of D major, which sounds striking after the F-major cadence that preceded it. The *Adagio* is based on one central idea, heard immediately in the cello and marked *con espressione*. This song-like melody is quickly picked up by the clarinet and embellished as the movement proceeds. Beethoven must have had a particular fondness for this theme, for he used it–in slightly altered form–in his *Septet* of 1800 and his *Piano Sonata in G Major, Opus 49, No. 2*, written in 1795.

The finale, marked *Allegretto* and titled *Tema: Pria ch'io l'impegno*, is a set of variations on a theme announced at the beginning by the piano. This sprightly tune was originally a vocal trio in the opera *L'amor marinaro* (also known as *Il Corsaro*, or *The Corsair*) by the Austrian composer Joseph Weigl, and that title translates: "Before I begin work, I must have something to eat." The opera had something of a vogue in Vienna at the time (it was premiered there on October 15, 1797), and Hummel and Paganini later wrote variations of their own on this same theme. Beethoven's movement consists of the theme, nine variations, and a coda. The first variation is for piano alone, but the second is for clarinet and cello duet, virtually the only time in the entire trio when the piano is silent. Subsequent variations alternate between major and minor keys, and a coda based on Weigl's theme brings the trio to a quick-paced conclusion.

Paraphrase on Themes from Verdi's *Aida*, S.436 (1877)
FRANZ LISZT
b. October 22, 1811, Raiding
d. July 31, 1886, Bayreuth

Liszt never met Verdi, but he greatly admired his operas, and he wrote piano works based on themes from six of Verdi's operas. Such works are usually classified as "paraphrases" or "transcriptions." The latter were (usually!) straightforward piano arrangements of a particular work, while the paraphrases used the music of another composer as the starting point for Liszt's own creative imagination–he could use that music to demonstrate his own keyboard virtuosity or his abilities as a composer.

Verdi came out "retirement" to compose *Aida*, and it was premiered triumphantly in Cairo in 1871. European performances quickly followed, and the opera became (and remains) one of Verdi's most popular. Liszt saw *Aida* and immediately began

sketches of a paraphrase on several of its themes. The project took some time, and the work was not completed and published until 1879, when Liszt was 68. Rather than choosing some of the opera's more spectacular passages for his themes, Liszt turned instead to two moments in the opera that are much more restrained (though still quite intense): from the end of Act I he chose the "Sacred Dance" of the priestesses, and from the very end of the opera he took the farewell duet of Aida and Radames, "O terra addio."

This is one of Liszt's most effective paraphrases. Instead of using Verdi's music as an avenue to unleash his own virtuosity, Liszt remains very much within the character of Verdi's scenes. He weaves together the "Sacred Dance" with the chorus of priests and priestesses, much as Verdi himself had done–Liszt's treatment manages to be sparkling and mysterious at the same time. The "duetto finale" from the end of the opera is sung by Aida and Radames as–sealed in the tomb–they face death together. Liszt begins with Verdi's haunting phrase that sets the words "O terra addio" and gradually transforms this into music of thunderous power. But rather than ending here on a note of virtuosity, he returns to the mood of the duet in opera–the music of farewell makes an ethereal return, then fades into silence.

First Rhapsody for Clarinet and Piano (1909)
CLAUDE DEBUSSY
b. August 22, 1862, Saint Germain-en-Laye
d. March 25, 1918, Paris

In 1908 Debussy was named to the advisory board of the Paris Conservatory. It was only a minor position, but for a composer never wholly free from financial worries it was a welcome appointment. Debussy's duties appear to have centered around the Conservatory's annual *concours*, the examinations held at the end of each academic year for instrumentalists. In 1909 Debussy was asked to provide two test-pieces for the *concours* for clarinetists. Debussy was a notoriously lazy composer who seemed to take a perverse delight in missing deadlines, and being asked to write academic pieces would seem exactly the situation to bring out this side of him. But–for whatever reasons–he found writing these pieces for clarinet an attractive challenge, and he completed them in 1910. The first, titled simply *Petite pièce*, is a sight-reading exercise, but the other, much more substantial, is an examination piece intended to test musicianship. Titled *First Rhapsody*, it puts clarinetists through their paces, offering the opportunity to demonstrate a singing, sustained sound in the opening section in 4/4 and to show off the agility of their technique in the jaunty and chromatic fast section in 2/4. Debussy could be sour and self-deprecating, but he was delighted by the *Rhapsody* and described it as "one of the most pleasing pieces I have ever written."

Debussy liked this music enough that the following year he arranged it for clarinet and orchestra, and that version has proven particularly effective. Debussy's title *First Rhapsody for Clarinet* seems to imply that he intended to write more, but he did not. His *Second Rhapsody*, not nearly so well known as the *First*, is for saxophone.

Kaddish for Cello and Piano (1981)
MARK KOPYTMAN
b. December 6, 1929, Kamianets-Podilskyi, Ukraine
d. December 16, 2011

Born in the Soviet Union, Mark Kopytman studied both medicine and music as a young man. He received his medical degree, but the lure of music proved too strong, and he went on to study music in the Ukraine and at the Moscow Conservatory. He taught in Moscow for some years and was awarded a number of prizes in the Soviet Union for his music. In 1972, Kopytman emigrated to Israel, where he became a Professor of Composition at the Rubin Academy in Jerusalem. He composed prolifically in Israel, taught at a number of institutions there, and also spent time as a visiting professor in the United States and in Australia.

One of Kopytman's most famous compositions, *Kaddish* was composed in 1981, and Kopytman intended that it could be played by either viola or cello and with the accompaniment of either piano or orchestra. A *Kaddish* is the Jewish prayer for the dead, and over the years it has had a number of different musical settings (for example, the first of Ravel's *Deux mélodies hébraïques* is titled *Kaddish*, Leonard Bernstein's *Third Symphony* is subtitled *Kaddish*). Kopytman gives his *Kaddish* a particularly dramatic structure: the cello plays the part of the oldest son reciting the prayer for the dead, while the piano takes the part of his departed father, so that over its fifteen-minute span this music acts out a personal drama. The tone is solemn, and the music pitches between a keening intensity and a more relaxed, lyrical manner. The first movement opens with a long recitative for the cello, then rushes ahead at the *Allegro molto*. This is dramatic music, lamenting and declamatory at the same time, and it powers its way to a fierce conclusion. Matters relax somewhat in the reflective middle movement. Kopytman's stipulation *lontano* ("distant, faraway") suggests something of the music's character, though a level of tension remains present even here. Longest of the movements, the finale returns to the manner and mood of the opening movement. It opens with a long cello solo that Kopytman stipulates should be *quasi recitativo*, and then the music presses ahead to dance, and a ray of sunlight passes over the surface (the marking here is *Giocoso vivace*: "happy and lively"). But the grieving mood of the opening returns, and on the cello's high harmonic and fragmented interjections from the piano *Kaddish* fades into silence.

Trio in A Minor for Clarinet, Cello, and Piano, Opus 114 (1891)
JOHANNES BRAHMS
b. May 7, 1833, Hamburg
d. April 3, 1897, Vienna

In March 1891 Brahms, then almost 58 years old and recently retired as a composer, journeyed to Meiningen in southern Germany. His purpose was pleasure: he wanted to hear the famous ducal orchestra there under its new conductor Fritz Steinbach.

Steinbach is remembered even today as one of the most famous of Brahms' interpreters, but on this trip the composer was much more impressed by another musician. The principal clarinetist of the Meiningen Orchestra was a young man named Richard Mühlfeld, and Brahms was captivated by the rich and mellow sound Mühlfeld could draw from his clarinet and by his musical sensitivity. The aging composer would sit for hours listening to Mühlfeld practice, and the result was inevitable: Brahms came out of his short-lived "retirement" and began to write for the clarinet. That summer, at his favorite retreat Bad Ischl in the mountains east of Salzburg, he composed two works for Mühlfeld: a trio for clarinet, cello, and piano and a quintet for clarinet and string quartet (two sonatas for the instrument would follow three summers later). Brahms journeyed back to Meiningen the following November for rehearsals with Mühlfeld and Joseph Joachim's quartet, and both works received their premieres in Berlin on December 12, 1891.

From that instant the Clarinet Quintet has been acclaimed one of Brahms' greatest works, but the Clarinet Trio has always languished in the shade of the Quintet's autumnal glow–it remains a connoisseur's choice rather than a popular favorite. The distinct sonority of the Trio rises from its unusual combination of instruments, and Brahms makes full use of the rich sound of the cello as well as the mellow sound of Mühlfeld's clarinet. So smoothly are those sounds intertwined, in fact, that Brahms' friend Eusebius Mandyczewski wrote to tell the composer that "It is as though the instruments were in love with each other."

The splendid first movement, marked simply *Allegro,* begins with the almost stark sound of the solo cello laying out the movement's noble opening idea, and this theme deserves particular attention. One of the projects Brahms had planned and then abandoned was a Fifth Symphony, and a number of scholars (Sir Donald Francis Tovey among them) believe that the cello theme that opens the Clarinet Trio was originally conceived as the opening theme of the Fifth Symphony. Listeners tantalized by the thought of what such a symphony might have been like may have some sense of that by imagining this noble opening subject played by an entire cello section. This theme grows more animated as it rides over the piano's spirited triplets, and the chaste second subject restores calm when it too arrives in the cello. The movement is in a generalized sonata form, though the recapitulation is shortened, and it comes to a particularly effective close: Brahms slows the tempo slightly, and clarinet and cello weave delicate strands of sixteenth-notes that answer and swirl around each other and–suddenly and softly–land on the calm final chord.

The *Adagio* opens with a subdued melody for clarinet that Brahms marks *dolce*; at a length of only 54 measures, this movement is remarkable for Brahms' ability to compress his musical experience into so short a span. The *Andantino grazioso*, in 3/4 meter, hovers on the edge of becoming a waltz; the clarinet's melody flows and dances gracefully without ever settling firmly into a waltz-rhythm. The finale, a sonata-rondo marked *Allegro*, offers some of the rhythmic subtlety of Brahms' late music, and listeners may have trouble deciding whether this movement is in duple or triple meter. Such uncertainty was clearly Brahms' intention: his opening metric

indication 2/4(6/8) changes frequently, and there are occasional passages in 9/8. The music surges with vitality, but Brahms keeps it anchored firmly in the dark A-minor tonality of the opening movement, and this little-known work closes in the same somber sobriety with which it began.

Program notes by Eric Bromberger