



THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

TRIO FONTENAY
Michael Mücke, violin
Niklas Schmidt, cello
Wolf Harden, piano

Wednesday, November 6, 1991
8:00 pm
Gartner Auditorium

Trio (1911) Charles Ives
Andante moderato 1874-1954
TSIAJ (Medley on the Campus Fence)
Moderato con moto

Trio No. 2 in E minor, Op. 67 Dmitri Shostakovich
Andante—Moderato 1906-1975
Allegro non troppo
Largo
Allegretto

Intermission

Trio in F minor, Op. 65 Antonín Dvořák
Allegro ma non troppo 1841-1904
Allegro grazioso—Meno mosso
Poco adagio
Finale: Allegro con brio

Steinway piano

The members of TRIO FONTENAY met eleven years ago as students at the Conservatory in Hamburg, Germany, and took the ensemble's name (which also means "source" or "fantasy" in medieval French) from a street nearby. Following studies with the Beaux Arts Trio and the Amadeus Quartet, the Trio won the 1983 Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy Prize from the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation and German Conservatories and first prize in the 1985 National German Music Competition in Bonn. Since then, the Trio has performed throughout Europe and North and South America; it is trio-in-residence at the Théâtre Châtelet in Paris. The Trio's recordings for Harmonia Mundi, Denon, EMI Electrola, and Teldec (their current exclusive label) include all of the piano trios of Brahms, Mendelssohn, and Mozart, and the complete Beethoven trios, now in progress.

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM
by Judith Eckelmeyer

In the world of music, there is a significant difference between depiction or representation and expression. When composers attempt to "translate" physical reality or activity into rhythms and pitches, the result is considered "programmatic." Expressiveness, however, can be evident through more abstract technical means without reference to extra-musical events. Often, works that are not programmatic but rather of the expressive category have been created as a result of exceptionally vivid or consequential circumstances in the composer's life. While the resultant music is not truly descriptive of these circumstances, there is likely to be a characteristic flavor or essence in the composition that conveys something of the original circumstantial impetus from which the composer began to work. Three examples of just such music comprise this evening's program.

Charles Ives had the exceptional fortune to be raised in a home environment that fostered experimentation and unconventional thought, Yankee self-reliance, practicality, and the abiding belief (influenced by Transcendental philosophy) in humanity's goodness and the access of human experience to the divine through intuition. Ives entered Yale University in 1892, graduated four years later and began his career in the insurance business in New York in 1898. He composed and served as an organist continuously from the beginning of his college years until 1902, when he left his formal association with music, became more involved in his insurance business, and began composing independently; his mature works are considered to be those from 1908 onward. The Trio for violin, cello and piano was, as he wrote, composed mostly in 1904 and completed in 1911, and thus was a product of the early years of his independence as a composer. However, the work is significantly influenced by the preceding years, especially those of his Yale education.

Ives' own memos, annotations, and sketches have been made available in several publications edited, transcribed, or compiled by John Kirkpatrick. Through Kirkpatrick (*A Temporary Mimeographed Catalogue of the Music Manuscripts and Related Materials of Charles Edward Ives 1874-1954*, Library of the Yale School of Music, 1960) we have Ives' original sketch for the title of the Trio revealing its conceptual foundation: "Trio Yalensia & Americana—for Violin Cello Piano [sic] <-----Fancy Names"; "Real name = -----> Yankee jaws—at Mr (or Eli) Yale's School for nice bad boys!!" Ives sketched a letter in 1948 in which he discussed the Trio (as given in Kirkpatrick's "Comparison of Sources" for the Trio and quoted by Paul Zukofsky for the Columbia Masterworks recording by the New York Quartet, 1973):

...the Trio was, in a general way...a reflection or impression of...college days on the Campus, now 50 years ago. The 1st movement recalled a rather short but serious talk, to those on the Yale fence, by an old professor of Philosophy; the 2nd, the games and antics by the students...on a Holiday afternoon; and some of the tunes and songs of those days were...suggested in this movement, sometimes in a rough way. The last movement was partly a remembrance of a Sunday service on the Campus...which ended near the "Rock of Ages"...

It was a stroke of serendipity to find in J. Peter Burkholder's *Charles Ives: The Ideas Behind the Music* (Yale University Press, 1985) a most interesting clue to the style—or rather styles—of the Trio's three movements. Burkholder writes of three great influences on Ives' creativity in his Yale years in successive sections discussing the composer and Yale professor Horatio Parker, the "Vernacular Music at Yale," and choirmaster and baritone John Cornelius Griggs.

Ives studied harmony, music history, advanced counterpoint, composition, and instrumentation with Horatio Parker. Ives' writings indicate that Parker was not pleased with the outlandish experimentation of polytonality and untraditional treatment of dissonances in Ives' music. Nevertheless, Ives absorbed contrapuntal technique and Parker's attitudes supporting the concepts of music as a moral force and of the importance of intuition in composing music. It is impossible to tell whether Ives consciously addressed his teacher's influence in the first movement of the Trio, but one is firmly reminded of it after the fact by the flowing contrapuntal lines and abstract, severe beauty of the writing.

Ives specifically pointed to the tunes and songs of the time and the antics of students in writing about the second movement of the Trio. His inscription for the movement, TSIAJ, was a cryptic acronym that "This Scherzo Is A Joke." Almost tonal sections propel almost recognizable songs with phrases stretched or elided. "My Old Kentucky Home" appears in a wonderful polytonal moment, followed by a quodlibet, polytonal, amid which we hear bits of "Ta-ra-ra Boom-dee-ay." There are sudden hushes and returns of the melee of old school songs and, finally, a rally yell from the sporting field.

John Cornelius Griggs was the one sympathetic, or perhaps more accurately, tolerant ear for Ives' experiments in composition while he was at Yale. As an undergraduate, Ives was organist at the Center Church in New Haven, where Griggs was choirmaster and soloist. Griggs believed that music is indefinite and could not be translated

into words or described verbally, and thus he would not have supported Ives' all too obvious presentation of the student holiday of the Trio's second movement. However, he also upheld a strong religious sincerity and believed in the importance of music in worship. Ives' third movement, imbued with an aura of late Brahms or even Mahler, has the abstract quality of pure thought or meditation that suggests Griggs' sense of the nature of music and its proper function, completely contrasting the ribald furious activity of the "vernacular" second movement.

Just as Ives' trio is unabashedly connected with his Yale days, Dmitri Shostakovich's so-called piano trio, the second, in E minor, reflects the circumstances of the late years of World War II. This trio and the second string quartet were completed and performed together on November 9, 1944. The eighth symphony had been written and premiered the previous year. In comparison with its noble and positive view of life, the piano trio dwells in a dark land, progressing from what D. Rabinovich calls "elegiac thoughtfulness" (*Dmitry Shostakovich, Composer*, trans. George Hanna, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959, p. 92) to a devastating portrait of death.

The war itself was only an externalization of what had been going on in Russia under Stalin, in Shostakovich's view; it was a universal condition in relation to the particular situation that Shostakovich had experienced personally. In *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich*, as related to and edited by Solomon Volkov (trans. Antonina W. Bouis, Harper & Row, 1979), the composer writes:

The majority of my symphonies are tombstones. Too many of our people died and were buried in places unknown to anyone, not even their relatives. It happened to many of my friends. Where do you put the tombstones for Meyerhold or Tukhachevsky? Only music can do that for them. I'm willing to write a composition for each of the victims, but that's impossible, and that's why I dedicate my music to them all.

The piano trio, dedicated to the memory of Ivan Ivanovich Sollertinsky, commemorates a unique relationship that was interrupted by Sollertinsky's death in February 1944—thus, in its own way, the event was for Shostakovich an even more private experience of loss in the war years. Sollertinsky was a musicologist and music critic, a man of barbed wit and evidently incorruptible opinion, and a supporter of Shostakovich's music; Shostakovich refers to him often in his *Memoirs* as "my closest friend."

The first movement opens *andante* with the cello's folk-like solo theme, muted and in harmonics, imitated canonically by the muted violin in harmonics and finally by the piano, *pianissimo* and in octaves in its lowest register. The restraint of this introduction is broken with the *tempo moderato* section, led by the piano theme presented over a range of four octaves against the pulsing violin and cello in the center. The pulsing rhythm is constant throughout the movement, present in at least one voice in almost every measure. This rhythm, the widely-spaced voices, and the frequently canonic treatment of theme gives the movement a special intensity that will be eventually counterbalanced in the fourth movement.

The second movement is a heavy-handed scherzo in a large ternary arrangement. Its wide-leaping line alternates with long scale runs, often peppered with chromatic passages and unexpected harmonic turns.

The third movement is constructed by *chaconne* procedure, that is, by laying down an eight-measure chord progression over and around which new material is presented. The chordal foundation appears in the piano, while the violin and cello provide a long expressive melody in canon.

The fourth movement, begun without pause after the third, is one of the most remarkable portraits of death anywhere in chamber literature, if not in all of contemporary music. Cast as a dance with a melody reminiscent of Jewish folk music and an incessant rhythmic device, the movement grins sardonically, swaying and whirling toward a triumphant peak. A momentary hush descends; the senses comfort themselves. Without warning the leering tune and machine-like rhythm are back again, only to be gradually laid to rest with the return of material from the opening of the first movement.

The impact of this fourth movement in music is such that words are not sufficient to convey all that it means, all that it represents. It is a dance of death; it is the horror of unremitting evil; it is oppression, joyful and confident. One of the few descriptions of the work is in Rabinovich's book (91-94), and because it is rather long we cannot conveniently reproduce it here; nevertheless, the reader is urged to seek it out, for Rabinovich has captured the essence of the music extraordinarily well. Consider this brief excerpt about the fourth movement:

The *Chaconne*, however, is only the introduction to the sphere of tragedy. The real tragedy is unfolded in the finale. Never has Shostakovich's fantasy created anything more awe-inspiring than this (typically Jewish) dance music. In the automatism of its rhythm, in the

inevitability of its accents that fall all the time on the same sounds, in the savage screech of the second theme there is something deathly.

In this "revelry" there is the impudent, cynical saturnalia of death...in the Trio the mocking executioner and the defenceless victim merge into one musical image, which no doubt has its source in the blood-curdling stories of how the S. S. men made their victims dance on the brink of their own graves... (p. 93)

In his music, Shostakovich's final tribute to his friend, to those war dead, to those victims of Stalin's regime is, as Rabinovich says, that the "composer...reminds us of death for the sake of life. He appeals to his listeners not to submit to death but to fight against it" (p. 94).

Antonín Dvořák's Trio in F minor comes from a period in which the composer faced a personal and a professional crisis. The death of his mother in mid-December 1882 sent him into deep grief; he began composing the trio in mid-February 1883 and completed it at the end of the following month. It was published in the same year by Simrock, who had been led to Dvořák's door by Brahms in 1877.

Ironically, it was just this supportive artistic association with Brahms that created the second crisis for Dvořák. Brahms, residing in Vienna, had become the focal point of an anti-Wagnerian faction. Recognizing in Dvořák a kindred soul and admirer of his music, Brahms had invited the young Czech composer to move to Vienna where he could participate in more cosmopolitan events which would, surely, benefit his growth as a composer. In addition, in 1882, not one but two producers—in Dresden and Vienna—had courted Dvořák in search of an opera—but one without a Czech focus, just at a time when Dvořák had found his success in his own folk roots. Dvořák's frustration, grief, and possibly doubt under this double-headed axe eventually spawned an assertive resistance that is unmistakable in the trio.

The work is set up in a relatively conventional format. The first movement is in the extruded sonata-allegro of the late nineteenth century; the second is in scherzo arrangement, albeit in duple meter; the third is calmer and lyrical; the fourth is a vigorous and highly syncopated *furiant*, in triple meter but peppered with hemiolas (two-beat syncopations). In his biography *Anton Dvořák* (trans. Y. W. Vance, Da Capo Press, 1971), Paul Stefan writes of the Trio that it

almost bursts the bounds and transcends the content of chamber music, passionately striving to merge in to the symphonic. In keeping with its blustering defiance, the very first theme of the opening movement is virtually a reiterated outcry of "Why?" answered by the

march-like: "Go ahead at all costs!" A bridge-passage of the exposition [in the first movement] cites the song, "The Cuckoo", from the Königshof manuscript (Op. 7, No. 3)*. The development and the repeat luxuriate in affirmations of the mood. In the Scherzo (Second Movement), the mood of defiance becomes capricious and the theme, with its peculiar accentuation, assimilates still another national overtone; piano and strings seem breathlessly to snatch it from one another. In the trio, a quiet reverie holds sway. The Slow Movement restores calm but not peace, for the modulations appear to jar against one another. In the Final, a theme related to the First Movement introduces the very spirit of revolt. Defiance may also be seen in the length of the development. At the very end, however, the contrasting theme, with a turn to the major, brings back at least a mild and peaceful, smiling mood.

*The Königshof Manuscript was "discovered" in 1817 and put forward as an example of ancient Czech poetry; like the "works" of "Ossian" before it, the manuscript became a highly popular source of texts for composers but was rather quickly suspected to be a fraud. Dvořák set six of the texts, which dwell on nature, in the set published as Op. 7.

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Dr. Judith Eckelmeyer is an associate professor of music at Cleveland State University. In addition to teaching and program annotation, she directs the Cleveland Choral Union, a small, independent, community-based ensemble which performs music of all eras. She has recently completed *The Cultural Context of Mozart's Magic Flute*, a two-volume set which will be published this month by the Edwin Mellen Press (Toronto).

This concert is presented as part of the Gala Subscription Series. It is made possible by the McMyler and Gartner Funds, the Anton and Rose Zverina Music Fund, and The Musart Society.

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The next concert in the 1991-1992 Gala Subscription Series features glass harmonicist Dennis James on Wednesday, December 11, at 8 pm. He is joined by flutist Marc Grauwels and Le Quatuor Quebec in works by Mozart and his contemporaries. Rebecca Fischer of WCLV-FM gives a free, pre-concert lecture at 7 pm in the Recital Hall.

Good seats are still available by subscription to any four of the six remaining concerts this season. Series fliers can be found in the North Lobby. You can also reserve seats for individual Subscription Series performances by calling 421-7340, ext. 282, Monday through Friday from 10 am to 3 pm starting the Wednesday before each concert; please call that same number for additional information.



FORTHCOMING CONCERTS

Free admission, unless otherwise indicated

Saturday, November 9, at 2:00 pm

Chamber music of Ilja Hurnik

Joshua Smith, flute; John Mack, oboe;

Brian Dumm, cello; Elizabeth DeMio,

harpichord; Sandra Simon, soprano;

Ilja and Jana Hurnik, duo-piano; Elizabeth

Cody, flute; Cleveland Institute of Music

instrumental ensemble

Sunday, November 10, at 2:00 pm
Ilja and Jana Hurnik, duo-piano
Transcriptions and paraphrases of
works by Vivaldi and Kuhnau,
and Hurnik's *Stravinskiana*

Sunday, November 10, at 3:30 pm
Dedication of new positive organ
Karel Paukert, organ; Sandra Simon,
soprano; Janina Ceaser, harpsichord;
CIM wind ensemble; Dwayne S. Milburn,
conductor
Works by Frescobaldi, Handel, Seixas,
C. P. E. Bach, and Gratiani, and the
first performance of Ilja Hurnik's
Concertino

Friday, November 15, at 8:00 pm
David Starobin, guitar
*Presented by the Dick Lurie Guitar Studios
to benefit the Department of Musical Arts.*
Call 321-8460 for tickets and
further information.

Sunday, November 17, at 2:00 pm
**Leon Lazarev, violin, and
Karel Paukert, harpsichord**
Works by J. S. Bach, Handel,
Reger, and Satie

Sunday, November 24, at 2:00 pm
Karel Paukert, organ
Works by Frescobaldi,
G. Gabrieli, Petrali,
and J. S. Bach

Sunday, November 24, at 3:30 pm
**Daniel Waitzman, flute, and
Elaine Comparone, harpsichord**
Works by J. S. Bach, C. P. E. Bach,
J. C. Bach, Boehm, and van Eyck

Sunday, December 1, at 2:00 pm
**Karel Paukert, organ
and harpsichord**
Works by Bull, Buxtehude,
and Franck