

Musica Viva!



Treble Logo—Marilyn Banner

THE MILO TRIO **Music of Brahms and Dvořák**

Washington Musica Viva

Sunday, November 17

dcmusicaviva.com



THE MILO TRIO

Carl Banner, piano

Celaya Kirchner, violin

Emma Hays Johnson, cello

Continuing on its series of concerts examining the the development of the piano trio, the Milo Trio returns to its home at Washington Musca Viva. The fifth of the eight-concert series exploring the history and development of the piano trio genre, takes features from two late nineteenth century composers, Johannes Brahms and Antonin Dvořák, who provide a prelude to the music of the 20th Century.

PROGRAM

Johannes Brahms

(May 7, 1833–April 3, 1897)

Trio #2 in C, Op. 87

(1880–82)

I. Allegro moderato

II. Andante con moto

III. Scherzo: Preso

IV. Finale: Allegro giocoso

Antonin Dvořák

(Sept 8, 1841–May 1, 1904)

Trio in E minor, Op. 90, "Dumky" (1890)

I. Lento maestoso – Allegro quasi doppio movimento

II. Poco Adagio – Vivace non troppo

III. Andante – Vivace non troppo

IV. Andante moderato – Allegretto scherzando

V. Allegro – Meno Mosso

VI. Lento – maestoso

PROGRAM NOTES

Brahms, Piano Trio in C, Op. 87. With the juxtaposition of Haydn and middle period Beethoven, it is easy to hear Brahms's second piano trio and recognize a third distinctive chapter in Viennese chamber music. Within an otherwise classical genre, a highly romantic voice surges through this work. The "second" trio might effectively be regarded as Brahms's first unequivocal masterpiece for the piano trio.

The sonata offers a wealth of themes—at least four distinct ideas that are closely related and expertly joined. As the music is a heady swirl of motion and color, so too is the form of the movement, varied without revealing any sectional seams. The music reiterates until reaching a significant coda. It ends back at

the opening theme, succinctly and finally closing on a simple perfect cadence.

The second movement presents a forlorn theme and five variations. With ever changing facets, Brahms renders a richly diverse palette of piano trio sounds and textures, an ensemble with a powerful unity yet, due to its sparseness and the distinctive timbre of its constituents, always an intimate braid of three individual strands. Effects range from emphatic song to tragic might and yet again to soft whispers, six stanzas of musical poetry.

The presto scherzo restores the momentum with a sharp, nimble lightness that evokes Mendelssohn for a second time in the program. Brahms places an onus on the pianist to apply extra effort to achieve an effortless sound. The trio is mellifluous and bountiful with layers of melody piling up and until they fade back into the nervous scurry of the C minor scherzo.

The finale returns to C major with a quirky main theme under the musical direction *giocoso* (playfully). While there is indeed a playful spirit abounding, calculated breakthroughs of Brahmsian grandeur make this fluid rondo a satisfying and ultimately noble finale.

Adapted from an article by Kai Christiansen

Dvořák, Piano Trio in E minor, Op. 90, "Dumky". In the "Dumsky" Trio, Dvořák was more strongly and more exclusively influenced by folk music than in any of his other major works, bringing forth one of the most profound artistic utterances in Dvořák's entire output. In Ukrainian folk music, the name *dumka* was given to a certain type of song with a nostalgic, elegiac character. Yet Dvořák did not use any original *dumka* melodies. He preferred to invent his own, which he did in several of his works in addition to this one. The work was well received. Following its introduction in Prague in 1891, it was toured through Czechoslovakia and played more than 30 times in five months.

Each of the six *dumkas* incorporates a contrast between slower and faster tempos—the former often coming across as sad and the latter as cheerful; the contrasts generally involve changes between the major and minor modes as well. But there are innumerable shades and gradations between those emotional states in the music, just as there are in life. And this is what prevents monotony in Dvořák's trio: each movement is a different personality, or rather, if we consider the fast and slow parts separately as we should, a different pair of personalities. Each of the six movements is also in a different key (in E minor/major, C-sharp minor, A major/minor, D minor–major, E-flat major, and C minor, respectively); therefore, it is not correct to refer to the entire work as the "Trio in E minor" as is frequently done.

The first movement juxtaposes a certain majestic pathos with a wild, syncopated dance. In the second, a melancholy *Adagio* alternates with a light-hearted melody that, however, stays in the minor mode and gradually takes on a *furioso* character. In the third, the slow theme is in the major and the fast one in the minor, not the other way around as before. The expressive cello melody of No. 4 continues with a playful "scherzando." In No. 5, both the tempo and the key relationships are reversed: a passionate melody in a major key is followed by a dreamy, "quasi-recitative" episode in the minor. The biggest surprise, however, comes in the last *dumka*, scored in an unremittingly tragic C minor. Its slow melody is perhaps the most poignant of all, and the fast theme ends the work with breath-taking dramatic force, without the slightest relief from the accumulated tensions.

Adapted from an article by Peter Laki

THE MILO TRIO

The Milo trio was formed in 2018 by Carl Banner, Celaya Kirchner and Emma Hayes Johnson, under the auspices of Washington Musica Viva, of which Carl Banner is the executive director. The group came

together when Bonnie Thron, principal cellist with the North Carolina Symphony, and occasional participant in Musica Viva programs, introduced her fellow cellist, Emma Johnson, to Banner, who in turn introduced her close friend Celaya Kirchner to him. Johnson suggested that they form a trio, and the group held their first concert on January 27, 2019, in the home of Richard White, who resides on Milo Avenue in Bethesda, hence the trio gained its name.

A musician since childhood, pianist Carl Banner studied with, among others, Harold Zabrack, Leon Fleisher, Leo Smit, and Leonard Shure, and performed in numerous solo and chamber concerts from the age of 14. In 1964 he was the winner of the Washington, DC, National Society of Arts and Letters Scholarship Award in piano. He continued to perform regularly while earning a PhD in cell biology from Harvard University in 1982. In 1998 he and his wife, artist Marilyn Banner, founded Washington Musica Viva, which to date has produced more than 300 chamber music concerts in the Washington DC area and elsewhere. In 2004, Banner retired from the National Institutes of Health in order to devote full time to music. With Musica Viva, he has produced concerts at the Embassies of the Czech Republic, Germany, Austria, Lithuania, Denmark, Israel, and the European Union, as well as at the Kennedy Center, New York's Czech Center, and the Donnell Library. He has also performed at the Wellfleet Preservation Hall and Public Library in Wellfleet, Mass. where his father, Paul, is a long-time resident.

Cellist Emma Hayes Johnson currently resides near the DC and Baltimore areas after recently finishing her second master's degree under the tutelage of Edward Arron at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. In addition to freelancing, Emma has been a member of several notable orchestras including the Spartanburg Philharmonic Orchestra and the American Festival Pops Orchestra. Her most recent performances include solo and chamber recitals and tours in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Virginia, and the Carolinas as well as France and Sri Lanka. As a chamber musician, she has worked alongside Xiao-Dong Wang, Hye-Jin Kim, Ara Gregorian, Colin Carr, Emanuel Gruber, and Raman Ramakrishnan. Prior to her engagements in Massachusetts, she

held the position of adjunct professor at Beaufort County Community College in North Carolina while also maintaining a private studio and freelancing. Emma studied at Converse College and George Mason University under the tutelage of Kenneth Law, and she graduated with her first Master's degree from East Carolina University under the instruction of Emanuel Gruber.

Celaya Kirchner currently resides in Northern Virginia after receiving her Masters in Violin Performance from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst under the tutelage of renowned pedagogue Elizabeth Chang. There she received a string quartet fellowship, performing four chamber music recitals and playing in masterclasses for members of the Cleveland Quartet, Ying Quartet, and Dover Quartet as well as many others. For her undergraduate degree, Ms. Kirchner studied with David Salness, of the Left Bank Quartet, at the University of Maryland. She also attended numerous summer chamber music festivals, including Green Mountain Chamber Music Festival, Bowdoin International Music Festival, Meadowmount School of Music, and Apple Hill Center for Chamber Music. In the summer of 2018, Ms. Kirchner travelled to Piobbico, Italy to participate in the Brancaloni International Music Festival, performing in a 13th century castle as well as in other venues in the Marche region. Ms. Kirchner also enjoys orchestral playing, regularly performing with the Mid-Atlantic Symphony Orchestra as well as participating in the National Orchestral Institute and Festival. In her teaching, Ms. Kirchner likes to focus on establishing a good technical foundation while also establishing skills for musical expression. Because why learn all of this technique if we don't use it to express ourselves? Ms. Kirchner also hopes to impart onto her students her passion for chamber music and the importance of learning chamber music skills.

Marilyn Banner. Marilyn is the artist whose music-related paintings grace the cover of these programs. She is a rising star among the artists who work in the "encaustic medium" in the DC area. Spend a little time browsing her works on her web site at **marilynbanner.com**.



Marilyn has participated in many individual as well as juried shows of her work, in the DC area and in New York. Also, her work is featured in the recently published **Encaustic Art in the 21st Century** by Anne Lee

Washington Musica Viva produces high quality, unpretentious public performances of a broad range of classical, jazz-based, and contemporary chamber music. WMV began as a monthly multi-disciplinary performance series in the Kensington studio of visual artist Marilyn Banner. Now in our 21st season, WMV has produced more than 300 programs, including performances at the Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage, the Czech Center in NY, the Embassy of the Czech Republic, the Embassy of Austria, Busboys and Poets, Twins Jazz Club, and the Brooklyn Conservatory. WMV is directed by pianist Carl Banner. Participants include professional musicians from Washington, Baltimore, New York, and elsewhere.

Washington Musica Viva, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization, and all contributions are fully tax-deductible. WMV can be reached at 301-891-6844 or **dcmusicaviva@verizon.net**. Our mailing address is WMV, 7502 Flower Ave, Takoma Park, MD 20912.

Program notes and composer pictures are adapted from material available online. Where available, names of original authors are provided with the text.

Program design by Hugh Haskell

Suggestions for improvement are welcome at haskellh@verizon.net.