

Musica Viva!



Saturday, May 25

7:30 PM

Church of the Ascension

633 Sligo Avenue

Silver Spring

dcmusicaviva.com

PROGRAM

Felix Mendelssohn

(Feb. 3, 1809 – Nov 4, 1847)

Trio #1 in d, Opus 49 (1839)

- I. Molto allegro ed agitato
- II. Andante con moto tranquillo
- III. **Scherzo**: Leggiero e vivace
- IV. Finale: Allegro assai appassionato

Johannes Brahms

(May, 1833 – April 3, 1897)

Trio #1 in B, Opus 8 (1889)

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. Scherzo: Allegro molto
- III. Adagio
- IV. Finale: Allegro

The Milo Trio

Celaya Kirchner, violin
Emma Hays Johnson, cello
Carl Banner, piano



PROGRAM NOTES

Mendelssohn, Trio #1: Felix Mendelssohn's Piano Trio No. 1 in D minor, Op. 49, was completed on 23 September 1839 and published the following year. The work is scored for a standard piano trio consisting of violin, cello and piano. The trio is one of Mendelssohn's most popular chamber works and is recognized as one of his greatest along with his Octet, Op. 20.



During the initial composition of the work, Mendelssohn took the advice of fellow composer Ferdinand Hiller to revise the piano part. The revised version was in a more romantic, Schumannesque style with the piano given a more important role in the trio. Indeed, the revised piece was reviewed by Schumann, who declared Mendelssohn to be "the Mozart of the nineteenth century, the brightest musician, who most clearly understands the contradictions of the age and is the first to reconcile them."

The first movement is in sonata form, without an introduction. It begins with a cantabile main theme played by the cello, with the piano providing a syncopated accompaniment. The violin then joins the cello with a distorted version of the theme. Further variations of the main theme fill the transition to the second theme, also introduced by the cello, which is in A major. Mendelssohn combines both themes in the development, which is predominately in D minor, the key in which the movement also ends. In the recapitulation, Mendelssohn adds a violin counter-melody to support the return of the original theme. The piano introduces the second movement, with the eight bar melody in the right hand and the accompaniment divided between the hands, as in a number of Mendelssohn's Songs without Words. Below this, the bass line in the piano moves methodically, carefully balancing with the accompaniment and the melody. After the piano plays the main theme, the violin repeats it with a counterpoint played on the cello. The short and light scherzo is essentially

in sonata form. As in the second movement, the main theme is first played on the piano, which then reduces itself to fragmentary accompaniment almost immediately. The rhythmic motif of the main theme is present throughout the movement, except in the more lyrical central section, whose theme resembles material from the first movement. After Hiller gave Mendelssohn his advice, the finale was the most revised movement and unsurprisingly has a busy piano part. Various keyboard techniques are called upon in the movement, from close chords to sweeping arpeggios and chromatic octaves. The cantabile moments provide a refreshing contrast. The trio finishes with a shift to D major shortly before the end.

Brahms, Trio #1 (revised version): It is well known that Brahms was in the habit of destroying those of his works which did not please him, and this fate befell not only youthful experiments, but entire mature works. So great was his insecurity that perhaps even great symphonies and concertos, which might have warmed all humankind, produced instead only a few moments of warmth from the composer's fireplace. A youthful work which escaped such a dire fate is Brahms' First Piano Trio. Completed in early 1854, it was the first of the composer's chamber works to be published. This occurred in spite of criticism from none other than Clara Schumann, whom Brahms adored and respected as friend and musician. Some 34 years later, Brahms accepted the invitation of his publisher, Simrock, to revise some of his early works, including this trio. Uncharacteristically, Brahms permitted both versions of the work to exist, and even suggested the two be promoted together. A century later, it is the revised version that is most often performed and recorded.



Like Brahms' other piano trios, and unlike those of Mozart, the work is in four movements, with a second-movement scherzo added to the usual three movements. This gives the work a near-symphonic scope; a

performance can run to nearly 40 minutes. The work begins pensively. After a brief piano introduction comes a marvelous cello solo theme which migrates to the entire ensemble. Rather than developing in the manner of Mozart's trios, the work then unfolds more like the first movement of a symphony, rich in themes and ideas. This long first movement, in fact, was that which Brahms most extensively revised in the later version of the work.

The Scherzo features a whispered, skipping minor theme which quickly bursts into a major key and becomes positively exuberant. A second, bucolic theme, still in the major mode, builds to grand proportions before the first theme returns, develops in startling directions, and ends the movement dramatically but quietly.

The work becomes mysterious in the Adagio. A passage of soft, stepping piano chords beneath singing phrases in the violin leads to an extended and very warm cello passage. In spite of its overall darkness, the movement is serene, almost meditative. It ends, as it began, with stepping piano chords.

The final movement is the most expansive of all, as Brahms once again makes use of the piano's power to create a symphonic sweep. A once-repeated passage of syncopation is strangely distracting, but the movement builds to a satisfying finish. As a piano trio, the work is notably enormous in scope and sound. Reflecting in its two versions both early and mature Brahms, it is a virtual blueprint of the composer's stylistic development.

Michael Morrison

THE ARTISTS

Celaya Kirchner, Violin: 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 master classes 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 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 this musical skill.

Emma Hayes Johnson, cello: Cellist Emma Hays 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 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.

Carl Banner, Piano: Carl began his musical career at age seven, taking piano lessons with his aunt, a well-known DC piano teacher, chamber musician and dance accompanist. Her husband was a violist, and the couple held weekly chamber music performances in their DC home. When his family relocated to St. Louis, he continued his lessons. In 1962, he performed the Schumann Piano Concerto with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. This achievement was, he reflects, 'a significant milestone for me in many ways.' He stayed in St. Louis to study for a year after his parents returned to DC. He joined his family the next year, but traveled by train twice a month to St. Louis for lessons.

After study at Yale, Washington University in St. Louis, the Music Academy of the West in California, and SUNY Buffalo, he returned to DC in 1970. 'Around this time,' he says, 'I decided to give up music and get a real job of some sort.' Following a PhD in cell biology at Harvard, he worked at NIH. But he never completely abandoned music, and after returning to DC in 1982, he 'assembled groups of very good amateurs,' among them the NIH Chamber Players and the Rock Creek Chamber Players, with whom he performed. Three years later, he formed the Millennium Ensemble and the Cezanne Trio, and initiated a regular concert series at several area venues. In 1988 Carl and his wife, Marilyn, formed the nonprofit Washington Musica Viva, 'to bring the kind and quality of chamber music that I dreamed of to the public.' He feels he is also 'bringing some new life to the form' of the piano recital.

Marilyn Banner. Marilyn is the artist whose music-related paintings grace the cover of these programs each month. 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 16th season, WMV has produced more than 200 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 adapted from Wikipedia

Program design by Hugh Haskell
Suggestions for improvement are welcome at haskellh@verizon.net.