

Gryphon Trio

The College of Wooster
Scheide Music Center
525 E. University Street
Wooster, Ohio 44691

Sunday, February 1, 2004
3:00 P.M.

material in the trio is Dvořák's own), the composer chose to expand upon the folk idioms to create a more satisfying piece of concert music. Dvořák scholar Otakar Sourek suggests that the composer incorporated the Czech verb *dumati* ("to meditate") into his rationale for the trio as well. Combining the two creates a musical statement which retains the popular spirit of the traditional *dumka* interlaced with more pensive and meditative occurrences, an apt description of Dvořák's *dumky*.

Several aspects of the trio can be considered unconventional for the time at which it was composed: It presents six *dumky* in a fashion resembling the Baroque dance suite; each is in a different key (unorthodox for any musical genre before 1900), all six are of approximately the same length (between four and six minutes) and all conform to roughly the same structural "blueprint." A slow, typically minor-key section opens each *dumka* (with the exception of the fifth) followed by a much quicker and brighter dance-like section that is musically related to the slower opening. Each *dumka* alternates between these two contrasting moods a few times before proceeding to the next in the set.

The structural similarities between each *dumka* is a satisfying substitute for the unity typically provided by the typical "blueprint" for multi-movement works, the four-movement sonata cycle. Additionally, Dvořák links the first three *dumky* together (two in the first movement, one in the second movement) without a significant pause, approximating the four distinct divisions which the audience of 1891 expected to hear. The emotional depth created by the sharply contrasting moods of the piece, coupled with a pleasant and approachable sense of lyricism throughout, made the "Dumky" Trio an instant success with audiences throughout Europe. Dvořák's efforts to enrich concert music through folk idioms continued soon after; in 1892 he journeyed to the United States and studied American folk music intensively, producing such enduring works as the "American" quartet and the "New World" Symphony.

Program Notes by Brian Biddle



Gryphon Trio

Jamie Parker, piano
Annalee Patipatanakoon, violin
Roman Borys, cello

Visiting Wooster for the third time, the Gryphon Trio is considered one of North America's outstanding piano trios. Formed in 1993, the group has performed in Germany, France, Belgium, Russia, Poland and Finland and tours regularly throughout Canada and the United States.

The trio takes its name from the Gryphon, a mythological creature, half eagle and half lion, which is considered a guardian of treasures and embodies the connection between psychic energy and cosmic force. The name is fitting for a group that thrilled much of the audience nearly breathless with its prior two performances here.

The Gryphon Trio has been Ensemble-in-Residence at the Music Toronto Chamber Series since 1988, and has been heard regularly over Canada's CBC national radio network as well as through international radio and television network broadcasts in the United States, Europe, and Asia.

The Gryphon Trio was nominated for a Juno Award for its recordings of the Haydn Piano Trios and the Mendelssohn & Dvorak Piano Trios on the Analeka label. The trio's more recent recording of Beethoven's Piano Trios Op. 1, No. 1 & 3, was awarded the coveted 4/5 by the French music publication, Diapason. Another recent CD "Canadian Premieres," featuring newly commissioned works by contemporary Canadian composers, has also received excellent reviews. As further evidence of their commitment to contemporary works, the Gryphon Trio is currently producing a multimedia theatrical presentation of Christos Hatzis' "Constantinople," an exploration of cultural convergence and the human spirit, to be premiered this summer.

Violinist Annalee Patipatanakoon currently performs on the 1717 Windsor-Weinstein Stradivarius violin. Cellist Roman Borys performs on the 1824 McConnell-Gagliano cello. Both remarkable instruments are on loan from The Canada Council for the Arts Musical Instrument Bank.

Dr. Jamie Parker, Annalee Patipatanakoon and Roman Borys all teach at the University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Dr. Parker holds the Rupert Edwards chair in piano.

Written by Sarah Buck

PROGRAM NOTES

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

TRIO NO. 4 IN E MAJOR, K. 542 – The summer of 1788 was an extraordinarily prolific time for Mozart, producing two piano trios, two piano sonatas, and (most amazingly) the all three of his final and most beloved symphonies. The E Major Trio, which Mozart announced in a letter to a friend in June of that year, was finished only four days before the first of these symphonies (no. 39 in E-flat). It was written for Michael Puchberg, a close friend and great champion of Mozart's music who frequently lent the composer money.

The first of the trio's three movements (marked *Allegro*) exemplifies the Classic-era ideals of clarity and simplicity. Musical ideas are effortlessly passed between instruments and the thematic nature of the movement is evident throughout. Mozart's masterful use of chromaticism in the first movement is also noteworthy; though exploration of distant keys is more extensive than in his previous trios, the key changes are handled so subtly as to sound completely organic to the listener.

The second movement (*Andante grazioso*) presents a beautifully simple and elegant melody. Mozart's keen ability to craft such melodies is made obvious to any listener who has been captivated by the composer's operatic arias or the delightful themes of his piano concertos. A melody so well hewn needs little development to maintain the interest of the audience, and it remains intact for much of the movement. Mozart closes with an adventurous rondo (marked *Allegro*). The exuberance of the main theme is coupled with the chromatic daring of the opening movement to produce a satisfying conclusion to a piece which cannot help but illustrate the sheer brilliance of its composer.

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

TRIO NO. 2 IN E MINOR, OP. 67 – For Shostakovich, the year 1944 was plagued with hardships on many fronts. The Soviet Union was embroiled in the horror of World War II and the ultimately successful effort to repel the Nazi invasion at the expense of more than 15 million Soviet lives. Shostakovich was also forced to come to terms with tragedy on a personal level. Musicologist Ivan Sollertinsky had for some time been among the composer's closest friends; when controversy erupted concerning his two recently-composed "war" symphonies (the Seventh and Eighth), Sollertinsky suggested that Shostakovich return to the more intimate medium of chamber music as a reprieve. Shostakovich took the advice, and in early 1944 he showed Sollertinsky some sketches for a new piano trio. On February 11, only five days after giving an introductory speech at a performance of the Eighth Symphony, Sollertinsky died of a heart attack.

Overwhelmed by dual tragedies of war and personal loss, Shostakovich discarded his sketches and began again, this time seeking to create an elegy to the victims of both circumstances. The first of the trio's traditional four-movement cycle opens with a mournful canonic

dialogue, first stated in poignantly high harmonics by the cello, followed by the violin (initially sounding below the cello), then by the piano's lowest register. The sorrowful chant is suddenly transmuted into a faster *Moderato* theme which vacillates widely between moods, from foreboding to joyous to somber, possibly reflecting the onslaught of conflicting emotions experienced as the composer sought to come to terms with Sollertinsky's death. The *scherzo* second movement, in F-sharp major, seems to mock the serious nature of the preceding movement. The opening section whirls with a menacing energy, and the unabashed joy of the folk-like middle section (which would be delightful in other circumstances) only adds to the sinister contrast of the fleeting movement.

Among the most distressing aspects of the war for Shostakovich was the persecution of the Jewish people, at the hands of the Nazis (whose death camps had only been recently discovered) as well as the Stalinist regime of his own country. In the *Largo* third movement the composer crafts a musical elegy to these victims, using elements of scale and rhythm common to Jewish folk music. A monolithic B-flat minor chorale in the piano becomes the basis for a *chaconne*, and above the constantly repeating block chords is superimposed a beautiful Hebrew-inspired melody, first in the violin, then the cello. The ensuing interplay between violin and cello evokes moments of both superb consonance and tragic dissonance.

The fourth movement (marked *Allegretto* and in the home key of E minor) follows without pause, quickly establishing a drastically different character than its predecessor. Ties to Jewish music are maintained in the dance-like first section; the frequent use of *pizzicato* by the violin and cello underscores the metric rigidity of this section. Sections of contrasting character follow: An unusual dance in unbalanced-sounding 5/8 meter, moments of dramatic tension, and lock-step march sections, to name a few. Ultimately, though, Shostakovich returns the audience to the mournful landscape of the third movement's *chaconne* chords, this time leading to a more satisfying major-key resolution. Shostakovich draws the piece to a close with one of his Jewish-inspired themes in the cello's highest register, recalling the very first notes of the piece. It is a haunting reminder of the many victims for whom the trio serves as a eulogy.

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

TRIO NO. 4 IN E MINOR, OP. 90 ("DUMKY") – The unique personality of Dvořák's fourth and final trio has earned the piece wide admiration since its premiere in 1891. The source of the trio's descriptive title, an obscure allusion to today's audience, refers to the *dumka* (the plural of which is *dumky*), a Ukrainian folk song, poetry, and dance tradition. In the late 19th century the *dumka* was enjoying a popular revival throughout much of Europe, particularly Dvořák's native Bohemia. The Slavic *dumky* typically took the form of ballads dealing with traditional heroic figures; it likely appeared as a genre worthy of exploration to Dvořák, at the time firmly rooted in his nationalist period.

Rather than explicitly imitating preexisting *dumky* (all of the musical

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Program

Piano Trio in E Major, K. 542

W. A. Mozart

Allegro
Andante grazioso
Allegro

Piano Trio No. 2 in E minor, Op. 67

Dmitri Shostakovich

Andante: moderato
Allegro con brio
Largo
Allegretto

INTERMISSION

Piano Trio in E Minor, Op. 90 "Dumky"

Antonin Dvorak

Lento maestoso; Allegro vivace, quasi doppio movimento
Poco adagio: Vivace non troppo
Andante; Vivace non troppo
Andante moderato; Allegretto scherzando
Allegro
Lento maestoso; Vivace, quasi doppio movimento

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