

The Candlelight Concert Society

presents the

Gryphon Trio

Annalee Patipatanakoon, violin

Roman Borys, cello

James Parker, piano

Saturday, February 18, 2012, 8:00 PM

Smith Theatre, Horowitz Center, Howard Community College, Columbia, MD

Program

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Trio in C minor, Op. 1, No. 3

Allegro con brio

Andante cantabile con variazione

Menuetto: Quasi allegro

Finale: Prestissimo

Trio in B-Flat Major, WoO 39

Allegretto

Variations on an Original Theme in E-flat Major, Op. 44

Variation 1

Variation 2

Variation 3

Variation 4

Variation 5

Variation 6

Variation 7 – Largo

Variation 8 – Un poco adagio

Variation 9

Variation 10

Variation 11

Variation 12

Variation 13 – Adagio

Variation 14 – Allegro – Andante – Presto

~ Intermission ~

Trio in B-Flat Major, Op. 97, "Archduke"

Allegro moderato

Scherzo: Allegro

Andante cantabile, ma pero con moto

Allegro moderato

The GRYPHON TRIO is represented by Melvin Kaplan, Inc.

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Recordings: Analekta

Program Notes

Piano Trio in C minor, Op. 1, No. 3

The key of C minor always had a special meaning for Beethoven; his “*Pathétique*” Sonata, *Fifth Symphony*, *Third Piano Concerto*, and *Fourth String Quartet* can be cited as evidence. His *Third Piano Trio in C minor* also belongs in this group, since it is widely considered the most advanced of the Op. 1 trios and the first composition to bear the unmistakable stamp of his unique musical personality.

A compact, highly dramatic theme opens the work. After coming to a halt, it continues with a piano melody, a considerably lighter, tripping tune, which moves downward in direction. Beethoven expands both themes before introducing the second subject, a lyrical, singing melody that all three instruments share. The exposition ends with a reminder, starting in the cello, of the descending figure of the first subject. In a brilliant example of musical alchemy, the development starts with a transformation of the opening theme into a charming little waltz, but it soon gives way to an intense and stormy exploration of the theme. After a short working out of the second part of the first subject, Beethoven freely reviews the melodic material from the exposition and ends the movement with a short *coda*.

The utter simplicity of the second movement theme serves two purposes: it is easy to hold in memory, and it provides space for the increased complexity of the following five variations. Beethoven, though, goes beyond merely elaborating and ornamenting the original melody. By subjecting it to a series of expressive transformations, he exposes the wide range of moods and emotions inherent in the theme itself.

The third movement is an unexpected return to traditional minuet form after the highly expressive first movement and the advanced theme and variations. The descending scale that starts the trio calls to mind the striking scales Beethoven introduced in the development section of the opening movement.

The brusque, commanding opening of the *Finale* closely resemble the contour of the E-flat trio, with the Mannheim Rocket detonating between repeated chords. After being brought to an abrupt close, a subsidiary melody of beguiling charm emerges, simply stated first by the violin and then the piano. A calm second subject follows the extension of these two ideas and leads to the development. The recapitulation comes after an extended chromatic scale for the piano, but it starts with the lighter second part of the first theme, excluding the imperious outburst. In another departure from convention, instead of providing the more usual strong ending, Beethoven allows the music to disappear in a whisper.

— by Melvin Berger

Trio in B-flat Major, WoO 39

Beethoven composed the *Piano Trio in B-flat Major* for Maximiliane Brentano (1802 - 1861), the ten-year-old daughter of Antonie and Franz Brentano, presenting the work to her on June 26, 1812. The composer's dedicatory message is to his "little friend" as "encouragement in pianoforte playing". Beethoven must have liked the little girl very much, for she once poured cold water on his head and lived to tell the tale. After the family left Vienna in 1812 Beethoven remained in contact with them, and in 1821 Maximiliane received the dedication of the *Piano Sonata in E Major, Op. 109*.

Found among Beethoven's works after his death, the *Piano Trio, WoO 39*, was not published until 1830 in Frankfurt am Main. The simplicity of the piano part reflects the age of the Trio's recipient, but the simplicity does not prevent the pianist from being the "star" of the piece. There is little contrapuntal writing; most of the keyboard part consists of a single melodic line over repeated chords or Alberti figures. However, the lack of technical difficulty does not imply a lack of musical interest. Many aspects of the piece make it clear this is the work of the mature Beethoven.

In sonata form, the single movement, marked *Allegretto*, opens without introduction. The main theme is in the piano, with sustained accompaniment in the strings. When the violin and cello finally get the theme, it is truncated and played in a clever, layered fashion that sets in motion the modulation to the dominant. The secondary theme is an elegant, arching tune fashioned chiefly from a single, three-note motive. This, too, is introduced by the piano then transformed by the violin and cello. Beethoven begins the development section with the theme on the dominant, but quickly moves to the distant harmony of D Major and introduces a new motive. After some impressive scales for the left hand of the piano part the recapitulation begins, on the tonic, but with the theme transposed up an octave, soaring above a more active string accompaniment. The transition is just like that of the exposition, but transposed; it is one of the most predictable Beethoven had written in years. All the secondary material is resolved to the tonic before an impressively large *coda* begins with the main theme on E flat. Numerous scale passages and a lengthy trill emphasize basic keyboard skills as Beethoven continues to develop first theme fragments until the close.

Variations On An Original Theme In E-Flat Major, Op. 44

Beethoven is widely accepted as the most influential and revolutionary composer of all time, an emancipator who freed composition from the constraints and restrictions of eighteenth-century Classicism. Although poorly educated in subjects outside music, Beethoven read widely and believed passionately in the principle of the French Revolution – the right of all people to live in freedom and dignity, protected from the egregious greed and power of the nobles. During his lifetime the focus of music was shifting away from the church and the drawing rooms of kings and aristocrats to the concert halls of the bourgeoisie. In giving shape and substance to this new music, Beethoven helped change the role of the composer from craftsman, who provided music to satisfy his patron's need, to creative artist who composed in response to his own inner needs and urges.

Beethoven's great musical gifts, coupled with the force of his personality, allowed him to break free of the musician's usual menial station and attain a position of equality, at least in the sphere of music, with the most powerful people of his time. "It is easy to get on with the nobility," Beethoven explained, "if you have something to impress them with."

Beethoven's *Variations on an Original Theme in E-flat Major, Op. 44*, was written fairly early in his career, and is a lovely, simple work which gives all three instruments equal billing. The theme is of Beethoven's own creation, and provides a lively framework for the many variations he wrought.

— Program note provided by Melvin Kaplan, Inc.

Trio in B-flat Major, Op. 97

This, Beethoven's last piano trio, was composed within one month in early 1811. The piece is dedicated to Archduke Rudolph; hence it is commonly referred to as the "**Archduke**" Trio. The work is a contemplative piece which shows a side of the composer rarely seen before. It also marks a highpoint of his artistic maturity and falls into the period when the composer was passing from his so-called middle works to his late works.

The trio opens with a broadly phrased theme, which is then taken up by the strings and extended and elaborated by the whole ensemble. The exposition proceeds through a rich variety of musical material, but it is this opening theme which dominates the movement. Indeed, the entire development section is spun out of only its first four measures.

The opening theme of the *scherzo* seems almost childishly simple; given by unaccompanied cello answered by the violin. It lends rustic folk dance-like quality to the proceedings. By contrast, the trio section begins with a dark, chromatic *fugato* repetition of the *scherzo* section, the trio idea returns in a *coda*, but the *scherzo* theme is given the last word.

The slow movement is a set of variations on a song-like theme of the utmost serenity. Each variation applies a new rhythmic idea to the theme's harmonic framework, the mood ranging from contemplative to playful to tragic, gathering urgency but finally relaxing into a profound calm before proceeding directly into the *allegro moderato finale*. The *finale* exhibits a high-spirited playfulness, perhaps surprising in Beethoven; but it has its dramatic moments. At the end the 2/4 theme is recast into a 6/8 *Presto* by the strings while the piano trills in its upper register. After considerable development of this idea, the motion slows to a pause, only to be resumed redoubled in a final burst of furious energy.

— Program note provided by Melvin Kaplan, Inc.