

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) Piano Trio in G Major, K. 564

Allegro
Andante
Allegretto

Mozart's musical summer of the year 1788 had yielded an amazingly rich harvest with the composition of his last three symphonies (K 543 in E flat Major, K 550 in G Minor and K 551 "Jupiter" in C Major), a set of piano trios (K 542 in E Major, K 548 in C Major and K 564 in G Major) and the grand Divertimento for String Trio, K 563.

In stark contrast to the joy of creation that Mozart must have felt immersed in the work on the above compositions were the circumstances that clouded his personal life at that time: the death of his six-month-old daughter Theresia, as well as his pitiful financial circumstances. His family's social decline was reflected in their move to a much smaller apartment in a suburb of Vienna, and in a series of increasingly desperate plea letters to his friend and fellow freemason, Michael Puchberg, to whom our set of trios is dedicated, and at whose house Mozart hoped to perform them first. There is no evidence that the performance actually happened, but Puchberg did come through with several separate loans of small and big sums. Eventually these loans were paid back by Mozart's widow Constance, who, once on her own, turned into an astute businesswoman...

To fully appreciate the historic significance of our trio tonight, we should remember that Mozart did not compose any works for this combination of instruments until the year 1786. By this time, the old harpsichord (which was the keyboard instrument of choice until the early 1780s, and for which Mozart had written a single Trio in B flat Major, a decade earlier) had been replaced in Mozart's hands and heart by the modern fortepiano, an instrument with a wide range of dynamics and other expressive potential. So, within two years, Mozart composed seven little masterpieces that really became the basis for an important new chamber music sub-genre.

Our trio tonight is the last one to flow from Mozart's pen, and is a true gem in its simplicity and conciseness. Its three short movements are refreshingly unpretentious and texturally transparent. While the piano takes the lead, the strings are not merely doubling the left and right hand parts of the keyboard player, but "converse" with the piano and each other in the spirited dialogue that characterizes all of Mozart's creations. The outer movements skip along with an abundance of charm, while the Andante is a theme with six variations that grant each instrument its place in the sun before a minor variation gently peeters out, like a brook on a sandy beach, allowing the final variation to burst forth with new-found vigor. The concluding *Allegretto* with its folksy *Siciliano* rhythms evokes for me the innocent chorus of the country girls in "The Marriage of Figaro".

The *Trio K 564* is a mature work that succeeds to beautifully and almost imperceptibly balance contrasting emotions within single musical gestures. Its sonorous beauty, arching melodies and conversational texture, enveloped in elegance and grace render it as precious as some of Mozart's larger creations. It is a very complex piece of music cast into a highly condensed form - much as if the composer had poured liquid gold into a thimble!

Paul Schoenfield (*1947) Café Music (1985)

Allegro con fuoco
Andante Moderato
Presto

Paul Schoenfield was born in Detroit in 1947 where he began piano lessons at the age of six. Following studies at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, he earned a D.M.A. degree at the University of Arizona at the age of 22. He has described his creative output as follows: "I don't consider myself an art-music [serious music] composer at all. The reason my works sometimes find their way into concert halls is [that] at this juncture, there aren't many folk music performers with enough technique, time or desire to perform my music."

Inspiration for his compositions comes from a wide range of popular styles both American and foreign, vernacular and folk traditions, and the historical traditions of art music - usually imbued with a clever twist. It is not uncommon for Schoenfield to integrate in a single work eclectic ideas that evolved in entirely dissimilar worlds, delighting in the surprises elicited by their interaction, exemplified in the slow movement where a Blues melody turns into a Chassidic tune.

His, as Schoenfield puts it, "is not the kind of music for relaxation, but the kind that makes people sweat; not only the performer, but the audience!" Schoenfield is one of a handful of contemporary composers who acknowledges the different social functions music can fulfill in modern lives. This, along with his characteristic sense of humor, protesting the musical establishment, explains the popularity of his works and their accessibility. Schoenfield writes the following about *Café Music*:

"The idea to compose Café Music first came to me in 1985 after sitting in one night for the pianist at Murray's Restaurant in Minneapolis. Murray's employs a house trio which plays entertaining dinner music in a wide variety of styles. My intention was to write a kind of high-class dinner music – music which could be played at a restaurant, but might also (just barely) find its way into a concert hall. The work draws on many of the types of music played by the trio at Murray's. For example, early 20th century American, Viennese, light classical, gypsy, and Broadway styles are all represented. A paraphrase of a beautiful Chassidic melody is incorporated in the second movement."

Paul Schoenfield holds degrees in music and mathematics, has lived on a kibbutz in Israel, and now resides in Cleveland, Ohio. He is the recipient of numerous commissions and awards, including grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rockefeller Fund, the Bush Foundation, Meet the Composer, and Chamber Music America.

Franz Schubert (1797-1828) Piano Trio in E-Flat Major, opus 100

Allegro
Andante con moto
Scherzando. Allegro moderato
Allegro moderato

"Secretly, in my heart of hearts, I still hope to be able to make something of myself - but who can do anything after Beethoven?" *Franz Schubert to his friend Joseph von Spaun*

Franz Schubert, Vienna's only 'native' composer of the Classical period did not come from a family background of professional musicians. Rather, young Schubert grew up in the musically literate family of a

schoolmaster who began the musical education of his sons at an early age, including Franz in the family string quartet at the age of eight. Unlike Mozart or Beethoven, Schubert was never expected to become a virtuoso, but rather to develop his all-round musicianship. Maybe this explains why throughout his short but intense career Schubert never composed a full-fledged concerto? Nor did he appear as a celebrated performer in the Viennese concert halls - instead he labored away in seclusion and focused on the composition of symphonies, chamber music and songs.

In the fall of 1814, around the same time that the Congress of Vienna convened, the seventeen-year-old Schubert began to teach at his father's primary school. He celebrated his first public success as a composer with a performance of his *Mass No. 1 in F Major*, and he wrote his first masterpiece, a setting of a poem from Goethe's "Faust" called "Gretchen at the Spinning Wheel". During the year 1815 alone, in addition to his duties as school teacher, he composed no fewer than 189 works!. But he soon began to feel that the duties of the classroom impeded his creative work, and in July 1818, retired from teaching for good.

Unlike Beethoven, Schubert didn't actively pursue aristocratic patrons, but found much support from music lovers of the educated middle class. He formed many lasting friendships during his early times of independence, his friends often helping to secure for him the most basic necessities, such as room and board. But his sources of income were extremely limited and he remained perennially penniless. By and by, Schubert began to attract the attention of some of the leading performers in Vienna, and as a result produced a veritable series of masterpieces, amongst them his last three string quartets, the *Octet*, and the *String Quintet in C Major*. By the time he composed the two piano trios opus 99 and 100, in 1827, Schubert had entered a feverish rate of production, unparalleled in his own or any other composer's output, "arguably the richest and most productive eighteen months in our music history" (Benjamin Britten).

It is widely assumed that our *E-flat Major Trio* was intended for the first ever public concert dedicated solely to Schubert's music, which was held on March 26, 1828, in the hall of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde (Society of the Friends of Music)*. With the help of Schubert's devoted circle, it was a big success, artistically as well as financially, and he also was able to finally pay off some long-standing debts - after spending some of the proceeds to celebrate with his friends at their favorite watering hole...

Three celebrated Viennese musicians gave the difficult work its first rendering and contributed to its immediate rise to fame: the Leipzig-based publisher H. A. Probst requested the *Trio* for publication, and thus it became Schubert's first score to appear in print outside of Austria, a long-desired confirmation of his growing international reputation. When the publisher inquired regarding a dedication of the work, Schubert replied that the Trio was "not to be dedicated to anyone - apart from those who find pleasure in it." He requested that it be numbered, significantly, as his "opus 100".

The *E-flat Major Trio* in its original version is a truly monumental work suggesting symphonic dimensions. But, dear listeners, fear not! Publisher Probst as well as several of Schubert's friends convinced the composer that cuts were necessary ... The work's appeal remained strong. Robert Schumann, an early champion, summarized fittingly: "One glance at Schubert's trio, and all the troubles of human existence disappear, and the world is fresh and bright again!"

Schumann goes on to describe his impression of the first movement as "deep indignation, coupled with boundless longing". While I do not hear the "indignation", the complex thematic material presented right from the start indeed suggests multi-layered emotions. The dialogue-like textures make for an animated character throughout this beautifully crafted sonata form *Allegro*. The second movement's elegiac melody, first presented by the cello, is based on a Swedish folksong with the title: "Se Solen Sjunker" ("The Sun is Setting"), which Schubert heard sung by the Swedish tenor Isaak Albert Berg. Schubert accompanies the melody with a dirge-like march rhythm, emphasizing its plaintive character, before contrasting it with a more optimistic theme in the violin. The *Scherzo*, stylistically rooted in Viennese folk music, is a strict canon between the piano and the two string instruments, and in its trio section Schubert reminisces a rhythmical motif from the opening *Allegro*. This idea of cyclic connections between the movements, hinted at in the *Scherzo*, becomes a motivating factor

for the structure of the last movement, which quotes, in the cello part, the second movement's Swedish theme not only once, but twice!

“Let us accept this work as a precious legacy,” concluded Robert Schumann. “However many and excellent the seeds of time may be, they will not soon produce another Schubert.”

--Notes by Rebecca Hang

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