Creating Community Through Great Music 2022-2023

Chamber Music Amici

Wildish Community Theater, 630 Main St., Springfield

Obsession

3:00 PM Sunday, April 23

7:30 PM Monday, April 24

Ludwig van Beethoven
Piano Trio in C Minor, Op. 1 No.3

Nikolai Medtner
Piano Quintet in C Major, Op. Posth.

Eunhye Grace Choi piano • **Jessica Lambert** violin
Lillie Manis viola • **Steven Pologe** cello
Sharon Schuman violin

Artwork. *Blue Flower*, by Emily Proudfoot

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Welcome!

Sometimes, obsession can result in greatness that transcends time and space. Beethoven's compulsive use of germinal motifs and their development in his composition is quite well known. The C Minor piano trio, one of the composer's early chamber works, is a perfect example of his masterful writing. Born nearly a century later, the Russian composer and piano virtuoso Medtner admired Beethoven and stayed obsessed with the great composer's craftsmanship throughout his life. Medtner's posthumously published piano quintet is a fitting tribute to his hero. I hope you enjoy both musical and historical links between these two geniuses and their works. Finally, I am delighted to welcome our former member and violinist, Jessica Lambert, to join us for this concert!

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Program

Piano Trio in C Minor, Op. 1, No. 3 **Ludwig van Beethoven**

I. Allegro con brio
II. Andante cantabile con Variazioni
III. Menuetto. Quasi allegro
IV. Finale. Prestissimo

Eunhye Grace Choi, piano; Jessica Lambert, violin
Steven Pologe, cello

Piano Quintet in C Major, Op. Posth. **Nikolai Medtner**

I. Molto placido
II. Andantino con moto
III. Finale. Allegro vivace

Eunhye Grace Choi, piano; Jessica Lambert, violin
Sharon Schuman, violin; Lillie Manis, viola; Steven Pologe, cello

Program Notes

by Dr. Terry McQuilkin

This fourth program, "***Obsession***," in Chamber Music Amici's 2022-23 season consists of just two works: an early trio by **Ludwig van Beethoven** (1770-1827), and one of the last works composed by twentieth-century Russian composer **Nikolai Medtner** (1880-1951), whose reverence for the Viennese master might well be called an obsession. Though born more than a half-century after Beethoven's death, Medtner repeatedly referred to himself as "Beethoven's pupil," and we can hear in his music unmistakable evidence of his adherence to Beethovenian traits: rhythmic energy, thematic unity, and the thoroughness with which musical motives are developed.

Ludwig van Beethoven: Trio in C minor, op. 1 no. 3

In 1792, Beethoven moved from Bonn to Vienna, in order to study with Joseph Haydn. It was likely due in no small part to the urging of Beethoven's influential friend Count von Waldstein that Maximilian Franz, Elector of Cologne, agreed to pay for the young composer's expenses.

Beethoven arrived in the imperial capital in November, less than a month before his 22nd birthday. His lessons with Haydn began within a few weeks, although we don't know the extent of his studies with him. Meanwhile, the young composer set about establishing relationships with well-connected patrons, including Prince Karl Lichnowsky. It was in the prince's home, in late 1793 or early 1794, that a group of three of the emerging composer's trios received their first hearing. Beethoven's friend Ferdinand Ries described it thus:

> Most of the artists and music lovers were invited, especially Haydn, for whose quartets all were eager. The trios were played, and at once commanded extraordinary attention. Haydn also said many pretty things about them, but advised Beethoven not to publish the third, in C minor. This astonished Beethoven inasmuch as he considered the third the best of the trios . . . Consequently, Haydn's remark left a bad impression on Beethoven, and led him to think that Haydn was envious, jealous, and ill-disposed toward him.

Haydn's cool reaction to the work, perturbing as it was to Beethoven, was in all likelihood due to the older composer's assessment of the work's marketability, rather than his appraisal of its inherent quality. Nonetheless, after making some revisions, Beethoven published all three trios as Opus 1 in 1796, dedicating them to Lichnowsky. His decision to make these pieces his first numbered opus – thus his Viennese debut as composer – was of no small importance in this musically sophisticated city.

The C minor Trio is a work of seismic power, adumbrating the emotional heft of his mature works in minor keys. The first movement, marked Allegro con brio, opens quietly but soon rises to a fortissimo dynamic. The opening theme is constructed from two distinct motivic gestures; the first one is essentially a series of arpeggiated chords, and the second one, with its descending pickup notes, presages the "Pathétique" Sonata. A furious transition leads to the graceful secondary theme in E-flat (the relative major key), but soon fortissimo chords interrupt the calm. The development section is rife with stark dynamic changes and bold modulations. The recapitulation, a second development section of sorts, takes myriad side trips before charging to the final cadence.

The largely genteel Andante cantabile is a set of five character variations on a simple, elegant theme in E-flat major. Beethoven injects a heightened level of intensity into the chromatically inflected fourth variation, in the parallel minor key of E-flat minor. The Minuet, in C minor, foreshadows Beethoven's scherzo movements with its abrupt *sforzandi*, but a period of respite comes during the relaxed trio section in C major.

Like the opening movement, the C minor finale opens with a short, explosive introductory theme that precedes the "real" main theme. Marked Prestissimo, it exhibits the same incendiary passion of the first movement. In the coda, the combustive energy dissipates, and the work ends quietly, in C major.

Nikolai Medtner: Quintet in C major for Piano and Strings, Op. Posth.

Nikolai Medtner was 12 years old when he passed the examination to enter the Moscow Conservatory in 1892 – the year in which Alexander Scriabin and Sergei Rachmaninoff completed their studies at the institution. He gained considerable recognition early in his career, but in contrast to his two Russian contemporaries, his name had all but disappeared from musical programs by the time he died in 1951.

Though largely self-taught in the area of composition (piano was his declared area of focus at the conservatory), Medtner proved be a master of form, rhythm and counterpoint. He exhibited a gift for creating melodies, and it was not without reason that his friend (and sometimes financial supporter) Rachmaninoff called him "the greatest composer of our time."

Some early acclaim notwithstanding, several events militated against his continued success, including the Russian Revolution (he had no use for the Bolsheviks) and subsequent emigration

from his homeland, two world wars, and his dogged adherence to traditional harmonic language during a century that saw a declining interest in music employing functional tonality. His conservatism was not just a reflection of his aesthetic tastes, but a firmly held set of principles, laid out in a monograph titled *Muza i moda* ("The Muse and the fashion"), in which he decried the modernist practices of other composers.

Above all, Medtner believed it was the composer's duty to obey the Muse, the Muse being inseparable from God. It is in this context that we can best understand his music, particularly his Piano Quintet, which he considered to be a summation of his entire oeuvre. Though he began working on the Quintet in 1904 – completing the first movement the following year – Medtner did not finish it until 1948. It is probably the composition most inspired by his religious faith (raised a Lutheran, he converted to Orthodox Christianity in 1935.)

The first movement opens tranquilly (the tempo marking is Molto placido) with low-register arpeggios in the piano; the piano and strings then utter a melodic line that was certainly derived from the plainchant, "Dies Irae." Soon follows another chant-like melody, this one given the expression marking "cantabile," which is developed immediately. The "Dies Irae" theme is heard more directly in the formal development section, where both themes undergo extensive development; these themes are combined in the coda.

The second movement is essentially a penitential hymn; in the manuscript the composer penned as annotations several verses from Psalm 25, including "For Your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great." Development of the hymn-like melody follows, along with intermittent appearances of thematic material from the first movement. Intensity builds, although the volume level hardly ever rises above *mezzo-forte*. The movement segues into the finale without pause.

The final movement, marked Allegro vivace, is in a modified sonata form. Considerably longer than either of the previous movements, it opens with a celebratory march-like melody, and continues with contrapuntal development of this tune, as well as themes from earlier movements. The *cantabile* melody from the opening movement returns as a joyful paean, and the work draws to a triumphant close.

Musicians

Amici

Eunhye Grace Choi is an active pianist and chamber musician and is currently Artistic Director of Chamber Music Amici. She has performed extensively throughout the United States, France, Belgium, the United Kingdom, and South Korea, and has recorded for Naxos, Emeritus, and Origin Classical. A versatile keyboardist, she was harpsichord soloist for J. S. Bach's Brandenburg Concerto cycle and collaborated with Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg in Vivaldi's Four Seasons at the Eastern Music Festival. She is frequently invited as a resident pianist at competitions and conventions, including the International Clarinet Association's ClarinetFest and the Meg Quigley Vivaldi Competition and Bassoon Symposium. Grace served as collaborative piano faculty for six years at Eastern Music Festival, where she was the principal keyboardist of the Festival Orchestra under the baton of Gerard Schwarz. She served as music faculty and collaborative pianist at the University of Oregon (2017-2018) and Tennessee Tech University (2013-2017) in addition to summer faculty positions at the Chapel Hill Chamber Music Workshop and Interlochen Summer Arts Camp. Choi received collaborative piano degrees from Florida State University (MM) and University of Minnesota (DMA).

Lillie Manis is widely recognized for her work as a Suzuki educator and is currently completing her doctorate at Teachers College, Columbia University, where her research focuses on studio teachers' holistic strategies for cultivating expressive performance in young violinists. From 2009-2020, she was a faculty member at the University of Oregon School of Music and Dance, where she mentored graduate violin and viola pedagogy students and served as the Assistant Director of the Community Music Institute. Lillie is currently on the faculty at the Willamette Violin Academy in Eugene. In the first decade of her teaching career, both the members of her vibrant pre-college studio and her graduate student mentees have achieved noteworthy musical and professional success, including competition wins, full scholarships to major music schools and summer programs, and college teaching appointments. Active as a clinician, master class presenter, adjudicator, and conference presenter at both the regional and national levels, she enjoys performing chamber music alongside some of the Northwest's finest players, and recently joined the editorial committee of the American String Teacher.

Steven Pologe has performed throughout the United States, and in Italy, Sweden, Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, New Zealand, and Canada. His CDs include quartets by William Grant Still and All That Jazz (both with the Oregon String Quartet), works by Jon Deak for solo cello and piano trio, and the piano trio of Lev Abeliovich. Steven is professor of Cello at the University of Oregon. He has performed frequently with the Oregon Bach Festival, Grand Teton Music Festival,

Aspen Music Festival, Rome Festival Orchestra, and the Green Mountain Chamber Music Festival. In 2006, Pologe and Emeritus Professor, Marjorie Woollacott (neuroscience), won a grant from the organization behind the coveted Grammy awards, the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. The award supported his research and publications documenting the precise movements of string players. Prior to moving to Oregon, Pologe was principal cellist with the Honolulu Symphony and faculty member at the University of Hawaii. To keep up with all Steven's activities, find him here, on his website, www.stevenpologe-cello.com.

Sharon Schuman is co-founder of Chamber Music Amici and served as Artistic Director for the first six years. As a child, she studied violin with Carol Weston, a student of Leopold Auer. After a summer grant to the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, she won a full scholarship in music to Stanford University, where she performed on a resident Strad. After she graduated with a degree in English, she earned a Ph.D. in that discipline at the University of Chicago. She has performed in a master class for Vladimir Spivakov and as concerto soloist with Oregon Mozart Players and the Salem Chamber Orchestra. She has also performed with the Oregon Bach Festival and Eugene Symphony, and she has served as concertmaster for Eugene Opera, Eugene Ballet, Eugene Concert Choir, and Oregon Mozart Players. She is now Assistant Concertmaster of the Eugene Opera Orchestra. After publishing Freedom and Dialogue in a Polarized World (2014), she edited A Voice for Justice: Writings of David Schuman (2021). Sharon is the 2021 recipient of the Eugene Arts and Letters Award.

Guest

Jessica Lambert played with Amici for seven years and completed her rotation as Artistic Director in 2020. She is a graduate of The Eastman School of Music, where she studied with Zvi Zeitlin and members of the Cleveland Quartet. Other major teachers include Alice Schoenfeld and Alexander Treger. Concertmaster of the Corvallis Symphony Orchestra since 2007, she is also the Artistic Director of the OSU Chamber Music Workshop, an intensive quartet program held in Corvallis in July. Jessica is widely recognized as a teacher and maintains a private studio in Corvallis. Her students have won regional and national competitions and have matriculated to the nation's most prestigious conservatories and summer programs. She has played viola with the Oregon Symphony and violin with the El Paso Symphony. She was concertmaster of the El Paso Pro Musica Chamber Orchestra, for which she was a featured soloist in the New Music series. A frequent guest of the Chintimini Music Festival since 2004, she performs as a soloist and chamber player throughout the Northwest.

Pre-Concert Speaker

Terry McQuilkin, DMA, received degrees in music composition from the University of Southern California and the University of Oregon. His catalogue of original compositions and arrangements include works for piano solo, chamber ensembles, wind band, orchestra and chorus, including commissions from Downingtown (Pennsylvania) Public Schools and the Delgani String Quartet. In 2006, the Oregon Music Teachers Association recognized him as the organization's Composer of the Year. Dr. McQuilkin taught music composition at the University of Oregon for 19 years. As a writer and music critic, he contributed hundreds of reviews and features for the music pages of the Los Angeles Times and the (Eugene) Register Guard.

Featured Artist

Emily Proudfoot

The rhyming and composition of the music became the inspiration for her imagery. "I picked out images and line types that captured that melody — the sweeping or staccato sound — and from there, I made drawings that were evocative of the pieces I was hearing on stage," Proudfoot said. "The melodies have a lot of movement, a watercolor fluidity to them."

"I paint to inspire more joy and kindness in the world," Proudfoot said. "I use bold colors and textured collage, embrace joyful themes, and insert humor in unexpected places for discovery and, ideally, laughter."

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Arthur Bliss Piano Quartet in A Minor, F. 18
Edward Elgar Piano Quintet in A Minor, Op. 84

Amici

Eunhye Grace Choi, piano
Lillie Manis, viola
Steven Pologe, cello
Sharon Schuman, violin

Guest Musician

Sunmi Chang, violin

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Art: *Red Flower* by Emily Proudfoot

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