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One and Only

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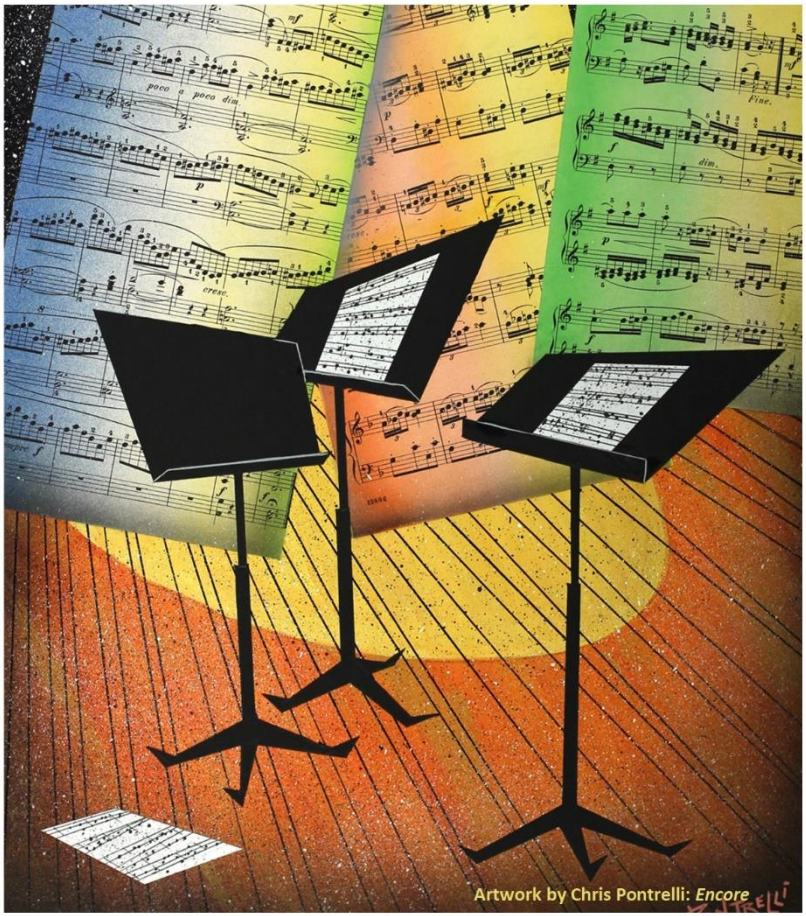
Claude Debussy Piano Trio in G Major

Camille Saint-Saëns Piano Quintet in A Minor, Op. 14

Hal Grossman violin • **Colin Pip Dixon** violin • **Arnaud Ghillebaert** viola

Steven Pologe cello • **Susan DeWitt Smith** piano

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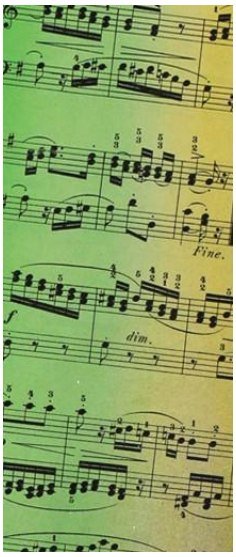
Chamber Music Amici receives support from the Oregon Arts Commission, a state agency funded by the State of Oregon and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Welcome!

Claude Debussy wrote his Piano Trio about 30 years after the youthful Piano Quintet by Camille Saint-Saëns (written around 1850), although it was not premiered until 1985! It is a small miracle that the manuscript of the score had resurfaced at an auction in the late 1970s, especially considering that Debussy wrote "one and only" piano trio. Despite the large output of piano compositions, Saint-Saëns's Piano Quintet happens to be his only work for such configuration. As both works were produced during the composers' formative years, they do not always showcase the highly unique characteristics that these iconic French composers are so well known for at the height of their maturity. However, the two stunning Romantic works will fascinate you with a glimpse of the prodigious talents and inspiration of these geniuses which later evolved into their signature "French" style.

It's been a rather frigid winter. I now invite you to sit back and let the music warm your heart and soul!

Grace Choi

Eunhye Grace Choi, Artistic Director

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Program

Piano Trio in G Major — Claude Debussy

I. Andantino con moto allegro
II. Scherzo: Intermezzo. Moderato con allegro
III. Andante espressivo
IV. Finale. Appassionato

Hal Grossman, violin; Steven Pologe, cello
Susan DeWitt Smith, piano

Piano Quintet in A Minor, Op. 14 — Camille Saint-Saëns

I. Allegro moderato e maestoso
II. Andante sostenuto
III. Presto
IV. Allegro assai, ma tranquillo

Hal Grossman, violin; Colin Pip Dixon, violin
Arnaud Ghillebaert, viola; Steven Pologe, cello; Susan DeWitt Smith, piano

We hope you stay for our post-concert reception by **Sweet Life Patisserie**

Program Notes

by Dr. Terry McQuilkin

Claude Debussy: Piano Trio in G Major

Claude Debussy was born in 1862, and after some early instruction on the piano, he enrolled at the Paris Conservatoire in 1872 at the age of 10. For the first few years, he made rapid progress. But beginning in about his fifth year of study, his professors began detecting an unwelcome rebelliousness in their student, and some of them complained that he was putting forth too little effort. Nevertheless, his piano teacher, Antoine Marmonte, recognizing Debussy's extraordinary musicianship, recommended him for a seasonal position in the service of Nadezhda von Meck, a wealthy Russian businesswoman, music lover, and most notably, Tchaikovsky's benefactor. Mme von Meck spent summers traveling to various upscale locations in Europe, taking along her family, several servants, tutors and musicians. Debussy's duties as a domestic pianist included teaching and accompanying various family members, as well as serving as Mme von Meck's duet partner.

In the late summer of 1880, the von Meck household sojourned in the town Fiesole, near Florence, where Debussy, joined by violinist Ladislav Pachulsky and cellist Piotr Danilchenko, played piano trios each evening. Encouraged by Mme von Meck to write a trio of his own, he completed his four-movement Trio in G major that September. On September 29 (Old Style), Mme von Meck wrote to Tchaikovsky: "My Frenchman also wrote a very beautiful trio I regret, dear friend, that I cannot send it to you for your review, because it will be impossible to copy since he is leaving in a few days." It is not known if the Trio was performed publicly during Debussy's lifetime, but von Meck's letter suggests that the work was performed privately – or least sight-read – by the household trio in Fiesole.

Debussy sent the score to his harmony teacher, Emile Durand, with the inscription, "Many notes accompanied by much friendship," but for a century after that, the Trio, aside from an autograph score of the first movement, was presumed lost. In the early 1980s American musicologist Elwood Derr discovered an autograph score of the other three movements among materials bequeathed to the University of Michigan's School of Music by the late pianist Maurice Dumesnil, who had been a student of Debussy. Twenty measures were missing, but using a cello part available from another source, Derr reconstructed those missing measures, and the German firm Henle published the Trio in 1986.

In a 1985 article in the journal *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Derr asserted that the chief stylistic influences on the Trio were the works of Robert Schumann and César Franck, two composers with whom Debussy was no doubt familiar. Aesthetically, however, the Trio is probably more akin to the works of Massenet (whose style Mme von Meck detected in Debussy's music), Fauré, and Delibes. Critics have faulted the Trio for lacking the thematic unity and formal integrity that we hear in the composer's mature works, comparing the

Trio to pretty salon music. However, the many harmonic shifts reveal the young composer's urge to unshackle himself from the stringent rules imposed on students at the Conservatoire, and the clever interweaving of melodic lines illustrate Debussy's proficiency in writing counterpoint.

The work is in four movements: The opening *Andantino con moto allegro*, with its flowing and very French-sounding opening theme in semiquavers contrasting with a lyrical second theme; the *Scherzo – Intermezzo*, featuring pizzicatos and inventive counterpoint between the strings; the *Andante espressivo*, anchored by an unabashedly sentimental melody introduced by the cello; and the finale (*Appassionato)*, built around two energetic melodies in 6/8 meter.

Camille Saint-Saëns: Piano Quintet in A Minor, Op. 14

Camille Saint-Saëns, born in 1835, was true child prodigy. He composed his first piece before his fourth birthday, and debuted as a concert pianist, performing concertos by Mozart and Beethoven, at age 10. He entered the Paris Conservatoire at age 13, where he studied organ, piano, and composition. By the time he started writing his only piano quintet, probably at age 20, he had completed his conservatory studies and had already composed his Symphony No. 1, at least two dozen songs, a set of pieces for harmonium, and a passel of student pieces. Not surprisingly, the Piano Quintet in A minor, probably written in 1855, shows remarkable maturity, and is rightly placed in the company of his later chamber works.

Piano quintets composed in the early eighteenth century were almost always scored for violin, viola, cello, contrabass and piano; such is the instrumentation of Franz Schubert's celebrated "Trout" Quintet. It was not until 1842 that a major nineteenth century composer – Robert Schumann – produced a work for two violins, viola, cello and piano, subsequently regarded as the standard piano quintet instrumentation.

It would be inaccurate, however, to draw a straight line from Schumann's Piano Quintet in E-flat to Saint-Saëns's Piano Quintet in A minor. By the time the young French composer left the

Conservatoire in 1853, he had become intimately familiar with a huge body of music: the great works of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert, as well music by Parisian composers past and present. One could assert that the Piano Quintet was in many ways the result of the composer's ability to absorb the styles and compositional techniques of a wide array of masters. The work reflects Saint-Saëns's command of thematic development and counterpoint, as well as his inclination to employ cyclical forms. The piano is very much the featured instrument in this work; indeed, the work has many of the characteristics of a piano concerto.

Saint-Saëns dedicated the Quintet to his great-aunt Charlotte Masson, who had been his first piano teacher.

The first movement, marked *Allegro moderato e maestoso*, begins with a solemn chordal introduction, played by the piano. Following this opening, three melodic ideas – two foreboding themes in A minor, and a relatively tranquil one in F major – are introduced and developed.

The second movement, *Andante sostenuto*, begins with a hymn-like theme in F major, played by the piano. The viola introduces the second theme, a lyrical melody soon taken up by the other strings. Before long the piano brings back the hymn-like tune, but this time the strings interpose between each phrase a whirling line in demisemiquavers that is later heard in counterpoint with the opening melody. The second movement leads without pause into the third: a furious *Presto* in the spirit of a Mendelssohn scherzo. The movement's main melodic idea springs directly from the whirling line heard in the *Andante sostenuto*. The frenetic energy lets up slightly with the introduction of a lyrical melody midway through the movement. A reprise of the first movement's opening material (this time played by the piano) brings the Presto to a close.

The finale begins with a Beethovenian fugato, played by the strings alone. When the piano enters, the two violins deliver the second theme, which throughout much of the movement is played in counterpoint with the fugato theme. About three and a half minutes into the movement, a melodic figure from the first movement makes a fleeting appearance, and at the end of the movement, that figure returns as the motivic material that drives the coda.

Musicians

Guests

Colin Pip Dixon is a violinist and composer who calls Eugene, Oregon home since 2017. Originally from New York City, he studied, lived, and worked in Paris, France for many years. As a founding member and co-artistic director of The Elsewhere Ensemble (www.elsewhereensemble.com) he has composed, performed and produced many works bringing together music with stories, theater, and poetry: *Icarus Quartet* (2021) (based on the myth of Icarus)*; Chekhov Triptych – three Chekhov stories in concert; The Happy Prince* (based on the Oscar Wilde story); *Invocation – a prayer for peace; His Majesty, the Devil – a play with music* (based on Dostoyevsky); *The Velveteen Rabbit,* among others. His works have been performed in New York, Boston, Eugene, Portland, Paris, Lyon, Beirut & Hammana (Lebanon), Brussels, Montreal, in the Edinburgh and New York International

Fringe Festivals, and the Max International Music Festival in Belgium. Recent commissions include: *Beethoven in the Stars* – for string orchestra and narrator (a remote film/recording of original music and writing coupled with the music of Beethoven for the Pacific University Philharmonic); *Birds Flying Through* – songs and instrumental interludes (a collective work by five composers scheduled for 2022). Other important works include *Underground – a musical* (based on Dostoyevsky) which is still in development. In France he worked closely for many years with Théâtre de l'Arc-en-Ciel (now Compagnie de la Première Seconde) as a violinist, composer and music director, receiving grants from the French institutions SACEM & SPEDIDAM and touring all over France, Belgium, Switzerland and Quebec. He was honored to perform Beethoven's Kreutzer Sonata at Les Invalides in Paris for the centennial of Leo Tolstoy's death in 2010. In Eugene he performs regularly as a violinist in the Eugene Symphony and has appeared with groups such as Oregon Mozart Players, microphilharmonic, and Chamber Music Amici. A certified Feldenkrais Method practitioner, he has given workshops on body awareness for musicians in Europe and in the US at universities and music schools as well as the ASTA National Conference and at Virtuosity.Online.

Arnaud Ghillebaert has played under the baton of great conductors such as Sir Colin Davis and Herbert Blomstedt and in the following orchestras: the London Symphony Orchestra, the Academy of Saint Martin in the Fields, the Bournemouth Symphony, Scottish Opera, Opera North, touring all over Europe. An avid chamber musician, he performed at the Louis Moreau Institute in New Orleans and in the "Starry Nights" music series at the Staller Center for the Arts (NY) alongside Eugene Drucker (Emerson String Quartet) and Nick Cords (Silkroad Ensemble); he recently

performed in a recital with pianist Anton Nel. He is a founding member of the Elsewhere Ensemble, a chamber group mixing music and spoken word/theater. He completed his Doctorate in viola and violin performance at Stony Brook University and is the current University of Oregon viola instructor.

Hal Grossman has been enthusiastically acclaimed by critics and audiences alike for his "vibrant tone" and "superb technique". Grand Award Winner of the Lima Young Artist Competition and Silver Medalist of the International Stulberg String Competition, Mr. Grossman also received First Prize Awards at the prestigious International Cleveland Quartet Competition and the National Fischoff Chamber Music Competition. His New York Debut at Carnegie Hall received exceptional reviews from the New York Times. He was invited to perform for their Royal Highnesses, Prince Charles and Princess Diana. Recital appearances have taken him throughout North America and Europe.

Susan DeWitt Smith

A native of Portland, Oregon, pianist **Susan DeWitt Smith** has an active career as both a soloist and chamber musician. She has performed as a soloist with the Oregon Symphony, and on subscription series with the San Diego Symphony, San Diego Chamber Orchestra, Palomar Symphony and the Dartmouth Symphony. A co-founder of the Nelson Chamber Music Festival in New Zealand, Dr. Smith is highly regarded as a chamber musician and has performed at festivals throughout the country, with musicians who include members of the Juilliard, Kronos, and Philadelphia string quartets. She has performed at the Bloch, Cascade Head and the Cascade music festivals in Oregon, as well as the Grand Teton, Hot Springs, and Olympic music festivals. An enthusiastic and committed proponent of music education, she co-founded the innovative and highly successful Music in Context series in 2005. A graduate of Dartmouth College, she earned her MM from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and her Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the Eastman School of Music. She is a member of Portland's Third Angle New Music Ensemble and teaches at Lewis & Clark College. Dr. Smith has recorded extensively on the KOCH International Classics label.

Amici

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 frequently performed 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.

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 **Chris Pontrelli:** "I'm drawn to the power of simple icons generated by our society. I greatly admire the work of mid-20th century designers. Some believe they were taking cues from the jazz and bebop musicians of that same era. There is a quick, lightness to their forms – abbreviated, yet complete. It is with this visual shorthand that I express my own artistic vision. Like many artists and musicians throughout history, I'm fascinated by the comparison of the two genres. We hear of musicians trying to "paint" melodies with color. And we see artists striving to bring music into a visual form.

As a life-long musician I find it natural to include qualities found in music when painting. Like a popular song I want my artwork to have an accessible beat and a colorful rhythm. I strive to create motion where there would otherwise be stillness. With each piece I ask, "Can your eyes dance to this?" "

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Musicians

Tyler Abbott **double bass**
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Brian Hsu **piano**
Lillie Manis **viola**
Steven Pologe **cello**

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