

# **Beethoven, Schumann, and Brahms: An Arc of Romanticism**

**Santa Cruz Chamber Players**

**February 24-25, 2018**

**Brian Johnston, Artistic Director**

The Robert Schumann–Clara Schumann–Brahms triangle has fascinated music lovers and historians for over a century, involving as it does three of the most beloved musical figures of the Romantic era. This program highlights the Schumann Piano Quintet, representing the Romantic era in its young and hopeful stage, and the Brahms c minor Piano Quartet, written largely after Robert's death amid Brahms' growing but apparently unrequited feelings for Clara. The program opens with a delightful serenade by the young Beethoven, still anchored within the classical style but showing signs of the revolutionary that later played a key role in ushering in the romantic era.

**L. v. Beethoven (1770-1827)**

**Serenade Op. 8 for string trio (1797)**

- I - Marcia: Allegro
- II - Adagio
- III - Minuetto: Allegretto
- IV - Adagio–Scherzo

Brian Johnston, violin  
Shannon Delaney, viola  
Aude Castagna, cello

**Robert Schumann (1810-1856)**

**Piano Quintet in E-flat, Op.44 (1842) (30 min.)**

- I - Allegro brillante
- II - In modo d'una Marcia: Un poco largamente
- III - Scherzo: Molto vivace
- IV - Allegro, ma non troppo

Brian Johnston, violin  
Be'eri Moalem, violin  
Shannon Delaney, viola  
Aude Castagna, cello  
Ben Dorfman, piano

*-Intermission-*

**Beethoven**

**Serenade Op. 8 for string trio (conclusion)**

- V - Allegretto alla Polacca
- VI - Andante quasi Allegretto
- VII - Marcia–Allegro

**Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)****Piano Quartet in c minor, op. 60 (1862-64)**

- I - Allegro ma non troppo
- II - Scherzo. Allegro
- III - Andante
- IV - Finale. Allegro comodo

Brian Johnston, violin  
Shannon Delaney, viola  
Aude Castagna, cello  
Ben Dorfan, piano

**The performers**

**Brian Johnston, violin, and artistic director**, is a violinist and biologist living in Scotts Valley. His teachers included Felix Khuner, Daniel Kobialka, and David Abel in the Bay Area, as well as Zino Francescatti, Peter Guth, and others at the institute for Advanced Musical Study in Montreux, Switzerland. He was concertmaster and soloist with the Berkeley Promenade Orchestra (now the Berkeley Symphony) and played first violin with the San Jose and Oakland Symphonies, the latter during his graduate studies at UC Berkeley. Later, while a post-doctoral fellow at MIT, he twice toured Europe (including performances at the Salzburg Festival) with the New Orchestra of Boston. He has played with the San Francisco Opera, American Ballet Theater, and San Jose Chamber Orchestra, among others, and appeared onscreen and in the soundtrack recording for the movie *The Godfather Part II*. He is an enthusiastic chamber musician and recitalist with performances in the UK, Germany, Portugal, and Switzerland as well as several regions of the US. These days he plays frequently as a first violin with the Santa Cruz Symphony and on various chamber music programs (including SCCP), and spends his nonmusical time as Founder and CEO of SomaGenics, a biotech company in Santa Cruz.

**Be'eri Moalem, violin**, was born in Jerusalem, Israel and currently lives in Palo Alto. He studied music at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and San Jose State University. Be'eri plays violin and viola in many different styles from Classical to Klezmer to Middle Eastern. He regularly plays in services at Congregation Beth Am, Los Altos Hills and Peninsula Temple Beth El in San Mateo. He has played with the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, Monterey Symphony, Viva La Musica, and others. In 2009 he won first place at the *Jews Got Talent* competition at Yerba Buena in San Francisco. Be'eri is also a composer. His composition *Wadi* for string orchestra was performed in Istanbul in 2010. His 2016 solo album, entitled "Exile" features original compositions, electronica arrangements of traditional Jewish songs, and more. Be'eri occasionally writes reviews for the San Francisco Classical Voice and the Palo Alto Weekly. Be'eri also teaches private lessons independently and at the German International School Silicon Valley. Aside from music he loves gardening and travelling. You can visit Be'eri's website and hear his music at [www.beeri.org](http://www.beeri.org).

**Shannon Delaney D'Antonio, viola**, grew up in Northern Virginia. She began studying violin as a Suzuki student and later studied with members of the National Symphony Orchestra. She holds a B.A. degree in Violin Performance from Stanford University and performs on violin and viola with several local ensembles including Espressivo, Ensemble Monterey Chamber Orchestra, Santa Cruz Chamber Players, Santa Cruz New

Music Works, Monterey Pops, and Cabrillo Stage. In addition, Shannon holds a M.A. degree in Education from the University of California, Santa Cruz. She is currently working to provide academic intervention in reading and math to students in K-5 at Westlake Elementary School in Santa Cruz, where she has been a faculty member since 2005. Shannon lives in Santa Cruz with her husband and two children, where she enjoys walking, reading, and enjoying the view.

**Aude Castagna, cello**, was born and raised in Paris, France. She studied cello and musicianship at music conservatories in Paris. She received the highest honor in her studies, the Premier Prix de Superieur. She also studied privately with members of the Paris Opera Orchestra and of the Orchestre de Paris, and spent many summers attending master classes and academies around Europe, including in Sienna, Italy, with André Navarra; Erzegom, Hungary, with Miklos Perenny; Prades with Arto Noras; Saint Petersburg, Russia; and Dartington, UK. Her performances in Paris included piano and cello recitals, piano trio and string quartet concerts, and with several Paris orchestras. In 1995 she relocated to Santa Cruz, where she obtained her Masters' degree in Music performance from UCSC in 1997. Aude has taught cello and music theory since the age of eighteen and was a teaching assistant while at UCSC. Currently, she teaches privately and at Cabrillo College. She has performed locally as a soloist (Haydn cello concerto with the EYO orchestra, cello and piano recitals), in local orchestras (Bay Shore Lyric Opera, Monterey Symphony, Monterey Jazz Festival Orchestra, Cabrillo Chorus) and also for the Santa Cruz Chamber Players. She is the founder of and cellist with the Paris String Quartet.

**Ben Dorfan, piano**, is a native of Santa Cruz, CA. He studied composition at Oberlin Conservatory and piano with Gene Lewis, Ivan Rosenblum and Frederic Lacroix. His compositions have been featured at SEAMUS National Conference, Electronic Music Midwest, the SPARK Festival, and most recently a world premiere concert at Peace United Church featuring his work *Mythos*, for string trio, flute, clarinet and piano. He is an advocate of new music, and in March 2016 was a featured performer in a concert of the music of Alex Shapiro. For the past three seasons Ben has worked with Jewel Theatre Co., musical directing *Guys and Dolls*, performing incidental music for *A Streetcar Named Desire* and returning this season to musical direct *Always...Patsy Cline*. In addition to teaching private lessons he is the staff accompanist for Pacific Collegiate School and St. Joseph's Church. As of 2017 Ben is a board member of Santa Cruz Chamber Players.

## Program notes

### L. v. Beethoven (1770-1827)      Serenade Op. 8 for string trio (excerpts)

Because Beethoven's early published works are so meaty, we sometimes tend to think of the composer as having emerged full-blown. But a closer look reveals that he didn't leap feet-first into symphonic textures, for example, until he'd worked through certain stylistic and formal problems that he later explored in works of ever increasing size. Most of his first twenty published works are piano sonatas or chamber works, and he achieved an almost unprecedented level of formal and technical sophistication in these genres before tackling the large-scale First Symphony in 1799. Among these chamber pieces were several works for string trio composed during the late 1790s (Opp. 3, 8, and 9), which were themselves a sort of preparation for his first set of String Quartets, Op. 18.

The string trio is a challenging genre, and thus its repertoire remains relatively small. It calls upon the composer to fill up, using three instruments, a texture normally requiring four or more. The trio did not have a long history like that of the quartet, as Classical-period harmonic theory was geared more toward the idea of four distinct voices, or of melody with accompaniment.

Yet Beethoven meets the challenge of the string trio with amazing aplomb. No doubt he had Mozart's E-flat Divertimento (K. 563) in his ears when he took up, probably in 1797, a work he called a Serenade, the publication of which was announced in the Wiener Zeitung on October 7, 1797.

Like Mozart's Divertimento, the Serenade follows a plan more in keeping with the incidental music of the day -- that is, instead of a traditional four-movement sonata form (Allegro, Slow movement, Minuet, Rondo), it consists of a free sequence of compound movements that are all or nearly all derived from some dance type or other.

Beethoven begins Op. 8 with an introductory Marcia: Allegro, a sort of throwback to the days when outdoor courtly music began and ended with a march, giving the musicians an opportunity to parade on and off the grounds. This leads directly into a touching and intense Adagio, which forms the main part of this movement. Then comes a brief and witty Menuetto: Allegretto, openly Haydnesque in its inspiration, but with the easy audacity that we associate with Beethoven even in his youngest years.

The third movement is another curious compound: An almost tragic Adagio in minor-mode alternates with a buffoonish Scherzo: Allegro molto. The Allegretto alla Polacca is a nod to another favorite 18th-century dance, supposedly Polish in origin, and the Andante quasi allegretto is an elegant set of variations on a discursive subject. The initial Marcia is reprised.

From notes by Paul Horsley. © Paul Horsley

### Robert Schumann (1810-1856):      Piano Quintet, Op. 44

Robert Schumann never wrote anything better than his Piano Quintet, one of the most perfect creations in Western music. In fact, he virtually invented the form as we know it: the quintets of Boccherini were arrangements, and those by Hummel and Schubert incorporated a double bass. Schumann had such success in combining a piano and a string quartet that many other composers followed suit, among them Brahms, Dvořák, Franck, Fauré, Reger, Elgar, Bloch, Martinu and Shostakovich.

The quintet was the prize production of Schumann's "chamber music year," 1842, in which, after an intensive study of classical works, he also wrote three string quartets, a piano quartet and some pieces for piano trio. The quintet, intended for his wife Clara and dedicated to her, was finished in October and incorporated musical signatures with deep significance for the Schumanns. Hans Kohlhase has convincingly argued that the quintet commemorates the painful four and a half years during which Robert and Clara were forbidden by her father to marry. It is clearly influenced by his admiration for Schubert's E flat Trio; but Schumann makes everything his own. The first movement has a marvelously bold first theme and a meltingly romantic second subject. The slow movement is a funeral march, as in Schubert's trio. The scherzo is based on a simple chromatic scale – of such touches are geniuses made – and the finale is a magnificent construction, ending with a masterstroke in which its main theme is combined with the opening theme of the whole work. The quintet is a portrait of Clara on two levels; the virtuosic piano part reflects her status as one of the great nineteenth-century pianists, and the lovely phrases given to the viola surely represent her more private self, the Clara that Robert knew.

We do not know what contributions Clara, a superb critic, made to the work, but we do know that Schumann's friend Mendelssohn made a crucial intervention. The very end of the work, with its contrapuntal tour de force, was probably inspired by Mendelssohn's quartet in the same key. Then, by a lucky mischance, Clara was unwell when the first private performance was given on 6th December 1842, and Mendelssohn played the fiendish piano part, which hardly ever lets up, at sight. He made astute suggestions for improving the slow movement and the scherzo: adding a second trio was his idea. Clara played in the first public performance on 8th January 1843, by which time the quintet had been revised, and pronounced it 'splendid, full of vigor and freshness'. It was published on her birthday, 13th September 1843.

From notes by Tully Potter

### **Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) Quartet for Piano and Strings in C Minor, Op. 60**

The great C minor Piano Quartet, op. 60 shows the art of a lion tamer and is easily one of Brahms' finest achievements. He began the piece while living with Clara Schumann and helping run the Schumann household while Robert was in the mental asylum. Brahms was candid that the brooding quality of the piece was a direct reference to Werther, Goethe's Romantic hero of unrequited love who eventually commits suicide. To his publisher he wrote, "On the cover you must have a picture, namely a head with a pistol to it. Now you can form some conception of the music! I'll send you my photograph for the purpose. Since you seem to like color printing, you can use blue coat, yellow breeches, and top-boots." That was the exact description of Werther and 20 years later Brahms was able to joke about his hyper-passionate feelings.

The piece was originally in C# minor, the key used by E.T.A. Hoffman's famous character, the hypersensitive composer Kreisler (on whom Schumann wrote his famous piano suite Kreisleriana). So it is transparent that Brahms was embroiled working out his growing feelings for Clara amid the tragedy of Robert.

The name of Clara appears immediately in the musical notes, based on Schumann's own musical motto for Clara—C#-B-A-G#-A, which Brahms in his revisions transposed in C minor to: Eb-D-C-B-C. A discerning ear will hear this motto and variations of it throughout the piece.

But for us this is significant mostly in that it took Brahms 20 years to sort this all out in a piece of such ambitious Beethovenian grandeur. Changing the key of the piece to C minor itself is a Beethovenian move, and the quartet certainly recalls the drama and fate motives of Beethoven's C minor pieces. The finale deliberately recalls Beethoven's stormier piano sonatas (op. 2#1 last movement particularly) as well as quotes of the 5th symphony motto. And placing the slow movement after the Scherzo can't help but recall Beethoven's similar decision in the 9th symphony.

C# minor was the key that represented for Brahms the suicidal unrequited lover. C minor was the key of Beethoven that represents heroic struggle. Brahms used the fusion of these two harmonic centers as a device to represent the powerful music drama of this piano quartet.

The two overriding compositional ideas in the quartet are the sigh figure and the octave. The sigh's two descending notes imbue gloom and expression, while the octave lends a power and drama. Frequently these ideas are bound together. The piece begins with octaves in the piano followed by the sigh figure in the strings. The second phrase begins a full step lower, as if the piece has literally fallen, and thereby creating a sigh figure on a longer structural level between phrases. The opening of the Scherzo is an octave followed by the sigh figure inverted (going upwards). The slow movement descends in an arpeggio down an octave followed by an inverted sigh. With Brahms' technique of developing variation, it is not an exaggeration to say all four movements are a continual evolution of these two ideas bound tightly together.

—Adapted from notes of Russell Steinberg