

LOS ANGELES PIANO TRIO DECEMBER 8, 2021

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Arizona Friends of Chamber Music Post Office Box 40845 Tucson, Arizona 85717

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Uncertainty. Decision-making under uncertainty has moved from being a central focus of research in statistical sciences, economics, and public policy studies to being the focus of everyday life. The St. Lawrence String Quartet had to cancel tonight's concert. From their agent: "The St. Lawrence String Quartet regrets that due to illness they are unable to travel and perform in Tucson on December 8, 2021." We are fortunate in securing a fine ensemble to replace them, the Los Angeles Piano Trio. We thank them for stepping in and send our best wishes and all our love to the St. Lawrence. This is the third schedule change we have had to make. The disbanding of the Artemis Quartet will require the Goldmund Quartet to grace our stage for the first time. And, of course, the Juilliard Quartet also had to cancel because of illness. With any luck the rest of our season will proceed as planned.

'Tis The Season! The season of lights, fellowship, and gifts. Our Year-End Campaign is in full gear. We are enjoying the end of a difficult year. Your generosity has seldom been more needed. Thank you.

JOSEPH THOMAS TOLLIVER *President* 



## LOS ANGELES PIANO TRIO DECEMBER 8, 2021



**Los Angeles Piano Trio** Fabio Bidini, *piano* Margaret Batjer, *violin* Andrew Shulman, *cello* 

Arts Management Group 130 West 57th Street, Suite 6A New York, NY 10019

#### LOS ANGELES PIANO TRIO

The Los Angeles Piano Trio brings a new level of refinement, emotional depth, and artistry to the piano trio repertoire, reflecting the City of Angels' rich cultural legacy, global impact, and vibrant energy. Venerated artists and long-time L.A. residents Fabio Bidini, piano, Margaret Batjer, violin, and Andrew Shulman, cello, founded the chamber ensemble in 2020, building upon their distinguished international careers as critically acclaimed soloists, chamber musicians, recording artists, and pedagogues.

Finding great joy in playing together, which is palpable, the three like-minded musicians embrace the artistic freedom and warmth provided within the structure of the trio, enabling them to express their distinctive musical personalities while creating highly collaborative, inspiring chamber music performances.

They present the core piano trio repertoire of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, and Dvořák, and 20th-century gems by Shostakovich, Ravel, and others, transporting audiences with their fresh, inventive interpretations, exceptional technical prowess, and abiding musical passion. Additionally, they plan to introduce new and seldom-played works in seasons to come, mirroring L.A.'s own diverse arts scene, which, rooted in tradition, also sets trends around the globe.

For Bidini, Batjer, and Shulman, who have performed together in various duo and ensemble combinations over the years, this project comes at the optimum time in their careers with each infusing the Los Angeles Piano Trio with decades of wide-ranging musical experience at the highest echelon, for which they have garnered tremendous accolades.

Tonight marks the first appearance of the Los Angeles Piano Trio on our concerts.

### TONIGHT'S PROGRAM

#### WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)

Piano Trio in E Major, K. 542

Allegro Andante grazioso Allegro

#### LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Piano Trio in D Major, Op. 70, no. 1 ("Ghost")

Allegro vivace e con brio Largo assai ed espressivo Presto

### INTERMISSION

#### ERNEST CHAUSSON (1855-1899)

Piano Trio in G Minor, Op. 3

Pas trop lent—Animé Vite Assez lent Animé THE SUMMER OF 1788 was an astoundingly productive time for Mozart, who wrote his final three symphonies, a piano sonata, and his esteemed K. 542 Piano Trio (the fourth of his six piano trios) within the space of three months. This period of heightened creativity coincided with particularly acute financial distress, resulting in a move to simpler lodgings, as well as emotional stress from the death of his sixmonth-old daughter Theresia. However, Mozart rarely allowed distressing external circumstances to deter his composition process.

Of the three piano trios written in 1788, K. 542 is considered the finest because of its fluidity and balance, as well as the haunting beauty that emerges from its deceptively simple materials. Mozart's trios of this period follow the same overall design—a sonata form movement in a fast tempo, a slower movement in a closely related key, and a rondo finale that begins with a piano statement.

The piano introduces K. 542's twelve-measure opening theme, which is expanded by all three instruments. A transition leads to the second subject, also twelve measures long, and the exposition closes with a chromatic version of the opening theme; the material is developed fugally. The rondo form finale begins with a simple theme that evolves into an eloquent, harmonically rich statement in the strings.

WITHIN A FEW YEARS after arriving in Vienna, Beethoven was celebrated as Europe's greatest pianist, its greatest composer of piano works, and a symphonist on a par with Haydn. He enjoyed the friendship and patronage of numerous aristocrats and fruitful relationships with his publishers. However, his growing deafness was a source of deep anguish. In 1802 he wrote a letter to his brothers from the town of Heiligenstadt: "I fear that I may be subjected to the danger of letting my condition be observed.... I have been at the verge of despair, and but little more and I would put an end to my life. Only art it was that withheld me—it seemed impossible to leave the world until I had produced all I felt called upon to produce." Despite this misfortune, Beethoven continued to compose works that reflected moods both goodnatured and serene. He embarked on a productive "middle period," roughly extending from 1803 to 1809, and created numerous large-scale compositions notable for their fluent technique and subtle originality.

Beethoven wrote his two Opus 70 Trios in 1808, the same year he composed his masterful "Emperor" Piano Concerto. During this period, he roomed at the palace of Maria Erdődy, a deceptively fragile widow whose friendship had sustained him when he first recognized his increasing deafness. He dedicated both Opus 70 trios to Maria, whom he affectionately called his "Father Confessor," and held both premieres at her salon.

Opus 70 No. 1 opens with a statement of two motifs—an assertive figure played in unison by all three instruments, followed by a singing cello phrase that is immediately echoed by the violin and piano. The piano then introduces an emphatic third motif, accompanied by scale passages in the strings. After a succinct development, the recapitulation expands the opening ideas.

Listeners, not Beethoven, have named Opus 70 No. 1 "The Ghost" because of its eerie Largo assai, a complete and dramatic contrast to the extroverted opening movement. Partially based on sketches for the witches' scene from his projected opera Macbeth, this somber D minor movement sustains an atmosphere of mystery and foreboding. Ominous crescendos and diminuendos underpin the two plaintive motives that recur throughout. Darkly shimmering figuration in the piano provides a suspenseful transition to the vigorous Presto (D major), which proceeds without pause. Clearly structured in classical sonata form and animated by playful passages of imitation among all instruments, this rapid movement provides warm relief from the stark and uncertain atmosphere of the Largo. Its two ideas, both of which reference thematic notes of the Largo, develop with genial expansiveness. A spirited coda concludes the movement.

FRENCH ROMANTICIST ERNEST CHAUSSON wrote his early G Minor Piano Trio in 1881, the formative year in which he left his mentor Jules Massenet to study with César Franck. Franck's celebrated Piano Quintet had been premiered the previous year, and Chausson's first chamber work, the Opus 3, could hardly escape its passionate and dramatic aura. Certainly Chausson knew the direction his own work must take, for his friends observed that he created the trio in his mind before writing down any notes. His fellow composer d'Indy wrote, "Chausson belongs to that strong race that suffers through their idea before producing it."

A brief introduction, Pas trop lent (not too slow), leads to a faster section marked Animé (animated). Essentially monothematic, this restless movement develops with numerous abrupt dynamic changes, a similarity to Franck's Quintet. Unsettled chromatic lines heard throughout the movement create an agitated atmosphere.

Vite (fast) is an intermezzo that develops with wit and poise. Its short phrases, each of three or four measures duration, are structured with an ear to symmetry. Double stops in the violin (two notes played at once) create a full harmonic texture.

The third movement, Assez lent (rather slow), expands the theme of the first movement to create a plaintive but sonorous statement. Each instrument precisely articulates its own elegiac line, all of which blend to form an expressive unity.

The vibrant Animé contains echoes of earlier themes; this hint of cyclic construction suggests the influence of Chausson's new mentor, Franck. The vivid themes and rhythms of this movement, as well as its overall solid craftsmanship, led d'Indy to write: "One feels, amid the Trio's beauties and weaknesses, the still unrealized aspirations of his soul and the foreshadowing of future works."

Notes by Nancy Monsman

"Chausson belongs to that strong race that suffers through their idea before producing it."

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