

SATURDAY

**FEB
22**

2:00 PM

Templeton Performing
Arts Center

CHAMBER CONCERT

BEETHOVEN / GRIEG / RAVEL

ARTISTS



Adam Neiman
piano



Bion Tsang
cello



Scott Yoo
violin

1:00 PM PRE-CONCERT LECTURE

with Dr. Alyson McLamore

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Piano Trio in E-flat major, op. 1, no. 1 (1794)

Allegro

Adagio cantabile

Scherzo: Allegro assai

Finale: Presto

EDVARD GRIEG

Cello Sonata in A minor, op. 36 (1883)

Allegro agitato

Andante molto tranquillo

Allegro molto e marcato

INTERMISSION

MAURICE RAVEL

Piano Trio in A minor, M. 67 (1914)

Modéré

Pantom—Assez vif

Passacaille—Très large

Final—Animé



NOTABLE INSIGHT

Beethoven & Grieg

FEB 20, 5:30 PM

Patty Boyd Concert Hall,
Santa Maria



NOTABLE DINNER

Ravel Trio

FEB 21, 5:30 PM

The Monday Club,
San Luis Obispo

PROGRAM NOTES

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

Piano Trio in E-flat major, op. 1, no. 1 (1794)



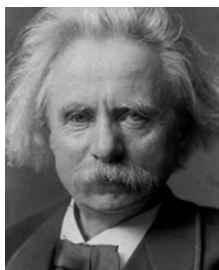
Almost surely, some people today will see “opus 1, number 1” in the program and will think, “Ah! We will be hearing Beethoven’s very first composition!” Other people may know that “opus” generally refers to *published* works, so they might expect to hear the first piece by Beethoven to be printed. Neither of those presumptions are correct: not only had Beethoven written dozens of works prior to 1795, when opus 1—a set of three piano

trios—made its print debut, but he also had *published* numerous previous pieces. Instead, Beethoven applied the “opus” designation to indicate that he regarded the piano trios as his first “significant” compositions. In fact, in later years, Beethoven issued certain pieces without opus numbers if he regarded them as unworthy of “opus” status.

The Opus 1 trios therefore hold a special position in Beethoven’s own perception of his legacy. He worked on them for at least a year, and perhaps longer. He had presented earlier drafts privately at the palatial home of Prince Lichnowsky, a long-term sponsor of Beethoven, and Haydn was particularly supportive of Numbers 1 and 2. Piano Trio No. 1, in E-flat major, clearly illustrates the care that Beethoven lavished on the set. Although he was one of Vienna’s most outstanding pianists, he gave the violin and cello substantial responsibility in the musical partnership. Melodic lines are shared, traded, and interwoven with kaleidoscopic flexibility. Portions of the trio are quiet and introspective, while others are cheerful or even boisterous. Moreover, Beethoven gave the trio added “weight” by writing *four* movements, when three would have been the norm.

EDVARD GRIEG (1843–1907)

Cello Sonata in A minor, op. 36 (1883)



Edvard Grieg composed only one cello sonata—and it’s easy to argue that he didn’t *need* to produce any others, since his one effort in this area was so exemplary. Of course, the right circumstances had to come into alignment before he could write it. Starting in 1880, Grieg had agreed to return to his hometown in Norway to serve as the orchestral conductor of the Bergen Harmonic Society. The responsibility was exhausting, however, and it

would be the last official post that Grieg ever accepted. By 1882, he had extricated himself from the commitment—and he also had received a commission of 3,000 Marks from the publisher Edition Peters for various new works. Even though exhaustion and ill-health left Grieg feeling out-of-sorts, the Cello Sonata (dedicated to Grieg’s brother John) was the first work to be completed for the commission; it premiered in 1883.

Despite Grieg’s general dissatisfaction with his efforts, the Cello Sonata is a powerful work. It is possible that it derived much of its energy from the fact that Grieg was *supposed* to be composing a second piano concerto as part of the commission, but channeled his creativity into this chamber work instead. The sonata seems quintessentially “Norwegian,” in part because of its references to some of Grieg’s own masterworks. He clearly was pleased enough with the piece to perform the piano part himself in numerous significant performances, including one of his very last public appearances, joining Pablo Casals in 1906. Generations of cellists besides Casals have relished the piece, including Alfredo Piatti, Hugo Becker, Mstislav Rostropovich, Steven Isserlis, Jonah Kim, and (of course!) Bion Tsang.

MAURICE RAVEL (1875–1937)

Piano Trio in A minor, M. 67 (1914)



Why would a living composer label his composition as “posthumous”? In Maurice Ravel’s case, it was because he had just volunteered to serve in World War I. For this reason, he made sure that the manuscript for the Piano Trio was extremely legible, so that it would be printed accurately, no matter who edited it. Moreover, Ravel worked much more quickly than usual. He noted, “The thought that I would go away forced me to do five month’s

of work in five weeks.” He told friends, “I am ... working with the sureness and lucidity of a madman.”

Despite the unusual speed, Ravel composed with his customary attention to detail. Ravel was currently living in the seaport town of St. Jean-de-Luz, and the odd pulsations of dances from the surrounding Basque countryside left their mark; he described the *Modéré* as “Basque in color.” However, Ravel went further afield for the structure of the second movement. In the early nineteenth century, Victor Hugo had introduced French readers to the *pantoum*, a poetic form from Malaysia that contained the rhyme scheme *abab bcba cdec dede* (and so forth). Ravel’s interlocking motifs resemble this tight-knit poetic pattern.

Ravel looked to the past for guidance in the third movement. The *Passacaille*, known in Italy as a *passacaglia*, uses the Baroque device of a repetitive melody that shifts from instrument to instrument. Each repetition is accompanied by an ever-changing array of counter-motifs. After this dark, quiet movement, the finale seems to sparkle with energy and life, and, at times, the three instruments achieve an almost orchestral intensity.