

PROGRAM NOTES: GARIBALDI TRIO
OCTOBER 16, 2022 – 2:30 PM
RAVEN'S CRY THEATRE

Program notes by Robert Markow

SCHUMANN: MARCHENERZÄHLUNGEN, OP. 132

- I. Lebhaft, nicht zu schnell
- II. Lebhaft und sehr markiert
- III. Ruhiges Tempo, mit zartem Ausdruck
- IV. Lebhaft, sehr markiert

ROBERT SCHUMANN: Born in Zwickau, June 8, 1810; died in Endenich, July 29, 1856

Throughout the history of music, literally thousands of trios have been written for all sorts of instruments. A rare, though highly effective, combination is that of clarinet, viola and piano, represented primarily by Mozart's *Kegelstatt* Trio (the first of its kind), Bruch's Eight Pieces Op. 83, Schumann's *Marchenerzählungen*, and a trio by Carl Reinecke. About fifty other composers have also written for this combination, most of them of recent vintage. These include Kalevi Aho, Milton Babbitt, Brett Dean, Jean Françaix, Gordon Jacob, Colin Matthews, Ethyl Smyth, and Jörg Widmann.

The *Marchenerzählungen* (Fairy Tales) is one of Schumann's last works (not to be confused with the *Märchenbilder* Op. 113 for viola and piano). It was written in October of 1853, shortly before his final mental breakdown, yet it is music of cheerful, at times even ebullient character, and well-organized. Its four short movements are unified by a motif heard in the viola in the opening bars. In the first, piano remains subordinate to the clarinet and viola, which engage in intimate dialogue. These two instruments complement each other ideally in their warm, rich tone and similar range. The piano comes to the fore in the second movement, with sturdy chords stamped out in a march-like pattern, interrupted by a brief lyrical interlude. The third, in pianist Harris Goldsmith's words is "a love duet between clarinet and viola (with piano acting as chaperone)." The final movement relies on powerful rhythmic impetus from the piano in its outer sections, which frame a lyrical interlude for viola and clarinet once again lyrically intertwined.

BRUCH: EIGHT PIECES, OP. 83

- No. 1. in A minor (Andante)
- No. 2 in B minor (Allegro con moto)
- No. 3 in C minor (Andante con moto)
- No. 7 in B major (Allegro vivace, ma non troppo)

MAX BRUCH: Born in Cologne, January 6, 1838; died in Friedenau, October 2, 1920

Max Bruch is not a composer whose name leaps to mind in chamber music circles. He is remembered today principally for a violin concerto (actually the first of three), the *Scottish Fantasy* for violin and orchestra, and the *Kol Nidre* for cello and orchestra (or piano). In his day, he was renowned also for his choral works, especially oratorios on secular subjects. His long life of 82 years embraced the revolution of 1848 at one end and the First World War at the other. Yet Bruch remained, if not unaware, at least very much impervious to the march of history, both musically and politically. As his first (only in 1988!) English biographer, Christopher Fifield, points out, “he was a man who failed to adapt to the startling changes which were taking place around him. He stayed behind to defend the bastion of mid-nineteenth-century Romanticism, and fly to the flag of Mendelssohn and Schumann. He thus became an increasingly isolated figure and an equally embittered one.”

This view explains the fact that even though the pieces on this program are technically twentieth-century music (written about the same time as Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring* and Schoenberg’s *Pierrot lunaire*), they could just as well have been written forty or fifty years before.

The eight pieces that constitute Bruch’s Op. 83 (of which we hear four today) were written in 1910 for the composer’s son Max Felix, an aspiring young clarinetist. (Bruch also composed the Concerto for Clarinet and Viola for his son.) In their original form, the three instruments were clarinet, viola and piano, but Bruch provided two alternatives: violin, viola and piano; clarinet, cello and piano. The first performance was given in the composer’s native Cologne in 1909, and Max Felix was favorably compared to the great clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld, for whom Brahms wrote his solo clarinet works.

The eight pieces are independent numbers, and Bruch himself recommended that they not all be played in a single performance. The quality is uneven, and performers generally pick the three or four best to present.

CLARKE: PRELUDE, ALLEGRO, AND PASTORALE

REBECCA CLARKE: Born in Harrow, England, August 27, 1886; died in New York City, October 18, 1979

Rebecca Clarke's long life (she died at the age of 93) was divided between her native England and her adopted United States. Her multi-faceted career included important work as a violinist, violist, teacher, lecturer, writer and composer. Clarke's musical training was carried out mostly at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where she studied violin with Hans Wesseley (1902-1904) and the Royal College of Music where she studied composition with Sir Charles Stanford (1904-1910). In the course of her busy life as a performer, she played with such luminaries as Pablo Casals, Artur Schnabel, Jacques Thibaud, Jascha Heifetz, and Arthur Rubinstein. She was a member of several chamber ensembles and orchestras, including as the first female member of Sir Henry Wood's Queen's Hall Orchestra. Her peripatetic existence took her as far afield as China, India and Japan.

Most of Clarke's catalogue consists of about sixty songs and over twenty pieces of chamber music. She came to prominence as a composer when her Viola Sonata was the runner-up for an Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge prize in 1919. The Prelude, Allegro, and Pastorale was composed in 1941 and first performed at the International Society for Contemporary Music Festival in the University of California's Wheeler Hall in Berkeley on August 6, 1942. The violist was Walter Herbert, and the clarinetist was Rudolph Schmitt, both members of the San Francisco Symphony. The score waited until 2000 to be published by Oxford University Press.

"The whole thing is very unpretentious," wrote the composer. "... a short, unassuming little Prelude, an Allegro which I originally thought of calling a Toccata, as it gives both players plenty of chance to show what they can do. The subject is more or less mirror-writing. ... There is a long fugato section in the middle of the movement, after a second subject in pizzicato chords on the viola. The whole of the second movement should sound very spirited, and is, I think, quite effectively written for both parts. The Pastorale is rather melancholy and nostalgic, ending in a very subdued way."

**MOZART: TRIO IN E-FLAT MAJOR FOR PIANO, CLARINET AND VIOLA
K. 498 (*Kegelstatt*)**

- I. Andante
- II. Menuetto & Trio
- III. Rondeaux: Allegretto

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART: Born in Salzburg, January 27, 1756; died in Vienna, December 5, 1791

We know that Mozart was a phenomenal keyboard artist, that he had many piano students of all levels, that he also loved to play the viola (he much preferred it to the violin, at which he was also an expert), that during his years in Vienna (1781-91) he counted among his best friends the clarinetist Anton Stadler, and that Mozart during this period was featuring the clarinet often in symphonic, operatic and chamber music. The trio we hear this afternoon, written in August of 1786, came about through the happy confluence of these circumstances.

As for the nickname "*Kegelstatt*," which translates roughly as "bowling alley," the apocryphal but entirely credible story goes that while Mozart was engaged in a game of skittles or ninepins (one of his favorite pastimes), he received the request for a chamber work for – ~~his~~ ^{his} ~~best~~ ^{best} piano pupils, Franziska von Jacquin and/or his friend Stadler. Mozart might well have thought, "Why not throw in a viola part for myself as well?" The first performance was indeed given by this trio of musicians, probably in von Jacquin's home.

None of the three instruments is featured any more prominently than the others. Each shares equally in the melodic material, sometimes alone, sometimes with one other instrument. Such is Mozart's endless invention that at no point are all three parts simultaneously engaged in singing the same melody.

The first movement is unified by a *gruppetto* (a quick turn around a central note) heard at the very outset and thereafter repeatedly throughout the movement. It turns up in the second theme (introduced by the clarinet) as well, though not initially. In the second movement the three instruments intertwine to an even greater degree than in the first. The movement's central Trio gives the viola, and later on the piano (but strangely enough, never the clarinet), some rapid-fire triplet figures. The beautiful, lyrical main theme of the rondo-form third movement is derived from the second theme of the opening movement.