

MADE IN CANADA ENSEMBLE

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GOODYEAR: PIANO QUARTET

STEWART GOODYEAR: Born in Toronto, February 25, 1978; now living in Toronto

Stewart Goodyear discovered the piano at the age of three. By four he was playing by ear on a toy piano. At eleven he won the Canadian Music Competition, at thirteen he performed his first concerto (Shostakovich No. 1) with the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra. It was his father's collection of LPs, which included much Beethoven, that sparked his keen mind and sent him in the direction of a musical career. At fifteen Goodyear graduated from the Glenn Gould School at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, where he studied with James Anagnoson. Subsequent study took him to the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia where he studied with Leon Fleisher, Gary Graffman, and Claude Frank, and to the Juilliard School in New York, where he studied with Oxana Yablonskaya and earned his Master's degree in piano performance. Goodyear is renowned for his signature marathon event: performing all 32 Beethoven Piano Sonatas in a single day. This he has done at several venues, including Toronto's Koerner Hall. His recording of the complete cycle received a Juno nomination for Best Classical Solo Recording in 2014. In October 2021 the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto appointed Goodyear its first Artist in Residence for a three-year term.

Goodyear is also known as an improviser, arranger, and composer. He invents his own cadenzas on the spot when performing concertos of the classical period, just as all pianists did in that age, every one different. As arranger he has transcribed Tchaikovsky's complete *Nutcracker* ballet for solo piano. And as composer, an activity he has been pursuing since the age of eight, Goodyear has more than a dozen works to his credit, including those with such intriguing titles as *Baby Shark Fugue*, *Count Up*, *Dogged by Hell Hounds*, and *Callaloo* (his orchestral tribute to Trinidad, where half his family grew up); and others with traditional titles like Piano Sonata (first performed at his graduation recital at Curtis), Piano Concerto, and Cello Concerto.

The pianist's discography includes his *Nutcracker* arrangement as well as his Piano Sonata and *Callaloo*; Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations*; a Ravel program; American works (including both of Gershwin's Rhapsodies); concertos by Grieg, Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff; and *For Glenn Gould*, which recreates Gould's 1955 U.S. debut program.

Goodyear wrote his Piano Quartet for the Kingston Chamber Music Festival in Rhode Island, where it was premiered by the Clarosa Piano Quartet on July 27, 2016. The composer writes: "The compact, one-movement work is divided into four sections without breaks. The first section is relentless in its drive, the strings at first accompanying the piano's dissonant, syncopated theme before exploding in its own energy. The second is calmer, a dance in ternary form and hypnotic in its 5/8 rhythm. The next section is slow, lyrical, and somber, the tension building with chromatic harmony and finally relaxing in the key of D major. The finale is a toccata consisting of a medley of themes from the preceding sections. The quartet closes with all the instruments quoting the theme of the first section."

SAINT-SAËNS: PIANO QUARTET NO. 2 IN B-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 41

- I. Allegretto
- II. Andante maestoso ma con moto
- III. Poco allegro più tosto moderato
- IV. Allegro

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS: Born in Paris, October 9, 1835; died in Algiers, December 16, 1921

Saint-Saëns' name does not often come up in chamber music circles, but in fact he composed a good deal of it. The second of his two piano quartets dates from just about the midpoint of his long life of 86 years. It was composed in February of 1875 and first performed the following month in Paris' Salle Pleyel with the composer at the piano and the renowned Pablo de Sarasate playing violin. Although Saint-Saëns lived amidst the world of Wagnerian splendor and romantic richness, most of his music, including nearly all the chamber music, harks back to an earlier age when clarity of form and classical norms held sway.

The quartet opens with a gracious subject that might be compared to a statement (piano) and response (strings) format. Its gentle lyricism informs the entire movement, including the second subject announced by the violin in descending triplets and imitated by the other three participants. W.W. Cobbett, in his *Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, offers this poetic account of the movement's final pages: "The piano falls into a slow march while the other instruments call to each other like cowherds with their flageolets, descending to the valleys at dusk."

The second movement has a slightly bizarre character to it. Two completely contrasting ideas compete for the listener's attention: (1) the abrupt rhythmic pattern set in motion in the opening bars by the solo piano, and (2) the slow-moving, chant-like line announced by the strings. Saint-Saëns puts the first through a nearly continuous contrapuntal display, decked out with all manner of trills, inversions, roller-coaster scales and thunderous chords.

The third movement is perhaps the most memorable, driven along by an unsettling rhythmic pattern filled with syncopation and suggestive of ghostly apparitions. In its breathless energy it reminds some listeners of Schubert's *Erlkönig*. Twice the forward motion is interrupted by a brief recitative, the first from the violin, the second from the piano. The movement does not so much end as vanish into the ether.

The finale too is remarkable. The first half of the movement is grand, densely scored and reminiscent of Brahms in its use of the entire range of the keyboard and sweeping gestures. Then, without warning, we suddenly find ourselves on a tour of material from the first two movements, now subjected to fantastic contrapuntal displays, and finally back in the quartet's home key of B-flat major, which we have not heard since the end of the first movement. The quartet hurtles to a powerful, dramatic close.

CHAUSSON: PIANO QUARTET IN A MAJOR, OP. 30

- I. Animé
- II. Très calme
- III. Simple et sans hâte
- IV. Animé

ERNEST CHAUSSON: Born in Paris, January 21, 1855; died at Limay, near Mantes, June 10, 1899

When Ernest Chausson's name is mentioned, it is often in the context of composers who died under unusual circumstances. In his case, it was from a bicycle accident at the age of 44, when he rode headlong into a brick wall and was instantly killed. Peculiar as the incident may be, Chausson was nevertheless a man of the utmost seriousness, a composer who blended romanticism, sensuousness, mysticism, and classical discipline into a personal style.

Chausson was no child prodigy. He had some musical training as a boy but was 24 before he gave serious thought to becoming a composer. He trained as a lawyer but upon passing the bar exam decided to go in a different direction. It was Wagnermania, fanned by his composer-friend Vincent d'Indy, that did the trick. In 1879 Chausson enrolled in the Paris Conservatoire, where he studied with Massenet and Franck. The latter had more influence on Chausson than the former. Franck's circle included many of the French Wagnerians, a circle that included Dukas, Duparc, Delibes, Saint-Saëns, Lekeu, Chabrier, and d'Indy, among others; it was a circle in which Chausson felt very much at home. He visited Munich whenever possible to attend Wagner performances there, and joined his fellow French Wagnerians for a pilgrimage to Bayreuth for the first performances of *Parsifal* in August 1882 (there were no performances at Bayreuth in the interim since the *Ring* cycle was first presented there in 1876), and again the following year with his new wife.

Chausson's output is small (just 39 opus numbers), as he was meticulous and highly self-critical in his work. His name lives on in the concert hall by means of a mere handful of works, mostly the darkly brooding *Poème* for violin and orchestra, and the haunting *Poème de l'amour et de la mer* for baritone (or mezzo-soprano) and orchestra. The Symphony in B-flat, one of the finest French symphonies of the late nineteenth century, has regrettably lost the popular appeal it once had. Some songs occasionally make it onto recital programs. Chausson's sole opera *Le Roi Arthus* is rarely heard anywhere, though the Paris Opéra revived it in 2015 for Thomas Hampson in the title role. The incidental music for *La Tempête* (a French version of Shakespeare's *Tempest*) includes a part for the celesta, believed to be the first time this instrument was ever used (December 1888, preceding Tchaikovsky's use in the *Nutcracker* by nearly four years).

Besides the symphonic works, four notable chamber music compositions help keep Chausson's name before the public today: the early Piano Trio (1881-1882), the *Concert for Piano, Violin, and String Quartet* (1889), and two late works, the Piano Quartet (1897) we hear this afternoon, and the String Quartet that Chausson was working on the very day he died (it was completed by d'Indy). The Piano Quartet was first performed in Brussels on October 6, 1897, and for the first time in Paris on April 2, 1898.

The first movement is built from three themes, each derived from a pentatonic (five-note) scale: the first presented in the opening bars, the second a lyrical idea initially heard in the viola, the third a chordal progression in the piano played a bit slower against a trill in the viola. Overall

Chausson maintains a mood of sunny optimism as the three subjects are developed and combined in various manners.

The second movement, marked *très calme*, opens with a long-breathed melody of haunting beauty in the viola, repeated by the violin and cello in octaves, and eventually the piano in richly textured writing. Over gently rippling triplets in the piano the three stringed instruments present a second subject, slightly faster but equally lyrical as the first. What began as a lullaby, or perhaps a midnight reverie, takes on a tempestuous quality. When this has run its course, the opening material returns, now in impassioned tones.

The brief (four-minute) third movement is light-hearted, almost dancelike in character. It consists of two ideas, each developed in turn, with a quick glance back at the first in the final moments.

The finale begins with stormy weather. Further ideas are presented, including recalls of thematic material from previous movements. As the Quartet draws to its conclusion, a beatific reminiscence of the second movement's main theme is followed by grandiose treatment of the same, now combined with the Quartet's opening theme into an apotheosis that brings the work to an impressive close.

Programme notes by: Robert Markow

Formerly a horn player in the Montreal Symphony, Robert Markow now writes program notes for that orchestra and for many other musical organizations in Canada, the U.S. and Asia. He taught at Montreal's McGill University for many years, and as a Wagner specialist has lectured at the Bayreuth Festival. He writes regularly for *Fanfare*, *American Record Guide*, *Der neue Merker* (Vienna), *La Scena Musicale* (Montreal), and *Opera Magazine*.