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The Selvaggi Trio

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How I Learned to Drive Mar 5 – 9; 11 – 12
School for Scandal.....Apr 11 – 13; 16 – 19

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Sholund Scholarship Concert.....May 3

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CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY

Conservatory of Music

presents

The Selvaggi Trio

Grace Fong, piano
Jun Iwasaki, violin
Patrick Jee, cello

April 19, 2008 • 2:00 P.M.
Salmon Recital Hall

Program

Piano Trio No.2 in E minor Op.67
Andante-Moderato
Allegro non troppo
Largo
Allegretto

Dmitri Shostakovich
(1906-1975)

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Café Music for Piano Trio
Allegro
Andante Moderato; Rubato
Presto

Paul Schoenfield
(b. 1947)

Intermission

Piano Trio in B Major, op. 8
Allegro con brio
Scherzo-Allegro molto
Adagio
Allegro

Johannes Brahms
(1833- 1897)

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Program Notes

Dmitri Shostakovich: Piano Trio no. 2 in E minor, op. 67
In February 1944, Dmitri Shostakovich found out that his very close friend Ivan Sollertinsky died suddenly of a heart attack, and within days, Shostakovich began composing the Piano Trio No.2, dedicating it to the memory of Sollertinsky. Between that time and early August, when he completed the second movement, Russian troops had liberated Nazi death camps at Treblinka, Belzec, Sobibor, and Majdanek. The shattering reality of the Holocaust began to be revealed with that news, and Shostakovich, who had been extremely sympathetic toward Soviet Jews since at least the late 1930s, was deeply grieved. Thus, the tragic significance of the piano trio took a turn at the midpoint, becoming an elegy for the murdered Jews of the Holocaust. The common wisdom is that the grotesque dance theme of the finale was written in response to stories about Jews having to dance on their own graves at the Treblinka death camps. This is considered the first of Shostakovich’s “Jewish” works, and he would continue to include Jewish themes in his music, especially in the late 1940s into the 1950s. When the work was premiered in November 1944 (with the composer at the piano), the audience was profoundly moved. One listener reported, “The music left a devastating impression. People cried openly.” In the first movement, the ghostly harmonics in the cello play separately, the strings muted, the piano in its lowest register – all suggesting that “something devastating” has occurred “that seems to have stunned the instruments and rendered them almost speechless.” The second movement is a sardonic scherzo; the third movement is a slow, somber passacaglia, an old form based on a repeating series of chords, in this case an eight-chord sequence. The finale incorporates reminiscences of the themes from the opening movement and the passacaglia. The elegiac chords from the third movement now return combined with bits of the Jewish theme to form a coda that lays the E Minor Piano Trio peacefully to rest.

Paul Schoenfield: Café Music
Paul Schoenfield composed Café Music for violin, cello and piano in 1986. According to the composer, he was inspired to write Café Music after sitting in for the pianist of the trio that regularly performs at a restaurant in Minneapolis called Murray’s. “My intention was to write a kind of high-class dinner music - music which could be played at a restaurant, but might also (just barely) find its way into a concert hall.” The most striking thing about Café Music is its blend and juxtaposition of many musical styles; from Ragtime, Viennese schmaltz, Broadway, gypsy, to the Hassidic folk music which he incorporates into many of his works. The second movement of Café Music incorporates one such lovely Hassidic melody. While Schoenfield, somewhat slyly, claims not to regard himself as an art-music [serious music] composer, yet this good-humored, enjoyable work represents a trend by some contemporary composers to synthesize the musics and styles of the last century, if not millenium into something new, yet free from the preaching, teaching, scolding, shocking qualities that 20th artists in all media felt incumbent to display in order to be taken seriously. Café Music was commissioned by the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and was premiered during a chamber concert in January 1987.

Johannes Brahms: Trio Op.8 in B major

The Piano Trio in B was the first published chamber work by Johannes Brahms (composed 1854, revised 1890), but it was doubtless not his first trio, and certainly not the first chamber work he composed. There is evidence that Brahms, a self-critic destroyed some 20 string quartets before allowing one (Op. 51) to be published in 1873. Brahms was at work on his Op.8 Trio in Hamburg in February 1854 when he received the news of his friend Robert Schumann's apparent suicide attempt, and he hastened back to Düsseldorf to comfort Clara and her children. It was under those conditions that he completed the Trio in December of that year. In the summer of 1889 Brahms revised the work so much that it would most accurately be described as an entirely new composition.

Brahms himself premiered this new version in Vienna in February 1890 with A. Rosé and R. Hummer. Afterwards, he wrote to Clara Schumann, "I had already sent this piece to the grave and had no interest to play it anymore ... Now I enjoy the fact that I did play it, and it was a very pleasurable day." It is noticeable that each movement begins in *piano* or *pianissimo*. The first movement is typical of Brahms, thick textures, frequently juxtaposing the heavy romantic piano with the strings, violin and cello unified in a variety of parallel harmonies and symmetric counter motions. To counterbalance such weight, Brahms offers the third movement adagio, a slow movement of such repose that it seems to hover, nearly motionless, an introspective intermezzo from another world. The lightest movement in multiple senses of the word, it is perhaps the most emotionally compelling, certainly, the most peculiar.

The Selvaggi Trio

The Selvaggi Trio is honored to take its name from Holly Selvaggi, a dear friend and lover of music who has been a mentor and inspiration to all who know her. Holly Selvaggi was born in Erie, Pennsylvania. She started singing when she was only four years old, making her debut as the Blue Fairy in the play "Pinocchio" at the Maryvale Preschool in Erie. On opening night, as she began singing her first solo "When You Wish upon a Star," the microphone had to be removed from the stage while she sang as the size and clarity of her voice caused the microphone to malfunction. From that night on it was clear to everyone that Holly should pursue musical studies. She studied piano during elementary school and voice and piano during high school and was accepted into The Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York where she majored in applied voice. She received a Bachelors of Music Degree with highest distinction in 1977 and a Masters Degree in 1979. She was a winner of the Eastman Concerto Competition in 1978 and a Winner of the Eastman Performer's Certificate. Holly was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship and studied voice and performed in and around Hamburg, Germany. After several years performing in Germany and New York City, Holly entered Northwestern School of Law where she received her Juris Doctor Degree in 1985. Holly now lives in Cleveland, Ohio with her husband Clark Harvey and is very involved in local musical institutions. She and her husband have provided housing in their home to many students studying at the Cleveland Institute of Music, including Jun Iwasaki.

Grace Fong is director of keyboard studies at Chapman University Conservatory of Music.

Jun Iwasaki is concertmaster of the Oregon Symphony.

Patrick Jee is assistant principle cellist of the Chicago Lyric Opera and a faculty member at Roosevelt University of Chicago.

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