

Lee Trio
April 25, 2010
First Unitarian Universalist Church of SA
San Antonio, Texas

ERNEST BLOCH
Three Nocturnes

The Swiss-born composer Ernest Bloch, whose early musical style drew inspiration from his Jewish heritage, is perhaps best known for his works that embraced programs and titles of his cultural origins, including Schelomo, the Israel Symphony, and Baal Shem.

Three Nocturnes for piano trio was written in Cleveland in 1924, the same year Bloch became an American citizen and one year before he assumed the position as director of San Francisco Conservatory of Music. These melodies are a departure from his earlier style, yet the mysticism and poetry remain. Each movement is written in a neo-classical style and depicts various characteristics of night. The first movement, *Andante*, evokes darkness and smokiness (listen to the bass line in the piano), while the second movement, *Andante quieto*, is a tender canonic lullaby. The final nocturne, *Tempestoso*, is driven by an undulating rhythmic pulse throughout, giving this movement a feeling of restlessness and turbulence. The calm theme from the second nocturne briefly appears, but the insistent repeating rhythmic material returns, only to evaporate into the darkness and mystery of night.

NATHANIEL STOOKEY
Piano Trio No. 1

Piano Trio No. 1 was commissioned by The Lee Trio and was premiered on October 27, 2009 in Berkeley, California. It is dedicated to the Lee sisters (Angela, Lisa, Melinda) in honor of their maternal grandmother, Shih Kwok-Shing, who celebrated her 100th birthday last year and has been a very important and constant figure in their lives.

Each of the three movements is named for one of the sisters, using the Chinese names given to them by their grandmother and prominently features the instrument of the dedicatee. In some way, each movement is intended to reflect the spirit of her name: Lisa Tien-Un (Heavenly Grace), violin; Melinda Tien-Wei (Heavenly Wisdom), piano; and Angela Tien-Yuen (Heavenly Melody), cello.

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FELIX MENDELSSOHN
Piano Trio No. 2 in C minor, Op. 66

Written in 1845, Mendelssohn's Piano Trio No. 2 in C minor, Op. 66, was dedicated to the violinist and composer Louis Spohr and is a model representation of Mendelssohn's writing at its finest. The first movement, *Allegro energico con fuoco*, is dominated by an unsettled feeling of urgency, with dramatic and at times furious exchange between the piano and strings. The lovely second movement, *Andante espressivo*, is reminiscent of Mendelssohn's collection of "Songs Without Words" for solo piano, which were written after his peak output of accompanied vocal song repertoire. The *Scherzo* conjures up the playful world of Mendelssohn's "Midsummer Night's Dream", rustling and bursting with energy in 16th-note passages that each instrument has a frenzy turn at elements like accents, trills, pizzicatos, as well as going from one dynamic extreme to next in an instant, add to the suspenseful, fairytale-like atmosphere. This movement, filled with delight, surprise and flight, demands nothing less than virtuosic playing--it seems as if the pianist barely touches keys and the violin and cello bows just fly over strings. The finale begins with a spirited dance-like melody in the cello that is passionately explored on each instrument. The theme is later combined with Mendelssohn's version of the Lutheran chorale *Vor deinem Tron* ("Before Thy Throne") that unites the three players and brings this masterpiece to a jubilant close.