

## Haydn, Piano Trio No. 39 in G Major, Hob. XV: 25 (“Gypsy”)

In the time of Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809), string chamber music involving the piano was considered in a different light from that for strings alone. String quartets, for example, were for “connoisseurs,” while sonatas and trios with piano were intended for the “cultivated amateur.” Part of this conception was due to imbalances between the parts. The piano was clearly and consistently the dominant instrument and Haydn’s English publishers even designated his piano trios as “sonatas for the pianoforte, with an accompaniment of a violin & violoncello.” Textures of that type predominate in the G Major Trio as well. The work first appeared in London in 1795 and, following its popularity there, it became a favorite on the continent as well.

The climactic movement in this trio is, of course, the *Rondo a l’Ongarese* finale, and the two previous movements prepare us for it. The opening *Andante* is a theme and variations, alternating each major variation with a minor one in the manner of Haydn’s “double” variation form. The fourth variation grants the violin an unusual opportunity for brilliant display.

In the *Poco adagio* movement, Haydn chooses the slightly unusual key of E major. In this multi-partite form, a lovely flowing melody, shared by the piano and violin, is supported by rippling triplet motion in the piano.

Haydn’s “Gypsy rondo” interlaces several melodies that he probably heard in the environs of the Esterháza palace of his former patrons or in Vienna. These tunes were the *verbunkos* (recruiting) dances used by Austrian hussars to attract the attention of young Hungarian peasants. In the 18th century, such troops were a common sight, and the Romany bands they employed made a striking musical impression wherever they went. As a lover of “folk” music, Haydn took this opportunity to give his impression of *verbunkos* music, at times allowing the violin free reign — even using flashy “Gypsy” effects such as left-hand *pizzicato*.

## Bernstein, Piano Trio

Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990) left us very little in the way of chamber music. More a man of the theater and the orchestra, he composed only five chamber works, among them the *Piano Trio*.

In 1935, young Bernstein became a music student at Harvard University, working with such highly respected professors as composer Walter Piston. In the midst of his studies, in 1937, Bernstein met two musical giants, who would soon figure prominently in his career: composer Aaron Copland and conductor Dmitri Mitropoulos. Meanwhile his formal music studies continued. We know of only a few works of student music from his Harvard years: some sonatas, dance music, incidental music for plays, and the *Piano Trio*. Composed in 1937, it was premiered by the Madison Trio at Harvard.

This work is more dissonant than we have come to expect from Bernstein, given his theatrical and orchestral music. It is immediately apparent in the slow introduction to the first movement. The quick main portion is more playful, so that dissonance becomes part of the fun. The climactic moment is a bright *fugato* that shows off all three instruments and then explodes into a broad apotheosis, returning to a slower tempo. This time it is in walking rhythms that quietly fade out.

Bernstein's later interest in "bluesy" music is forecast in the march-tempo middle movement. Also, a Prokofiev-like sardonic humor pervades the music right up to its jazzy ending.

Pensive at first, as though a slow movement were beginning, the music of the finale's *Largo* leads smoothly into an alternation of broad hymn-like phrases and short plucky interludes. Becoming gradually more declamatory, the music reaches a tense climax just before its booming end.

## Dvořák, Piano Trio in F Minor, Op. 65

The years 1882 and 1883 were a period of intense personal, spiritual, and artistic crisis for Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904). He was emerging as a successful Czech composer in central Europe, England, and elsewhere. Yet the influential German-speaking culture centers (chiefly Vienna) were asking him to shed his nationalistic mantle as the price of true celebrity. In December 1882, Dvořák's mother died, and in his bereavement the composer seems to have experienced a spiritual dilemma. Normally a man of simple and explicit faith, Dvořák's beliefs may have been shaken during the early months of 1883. For the postscript, "Thanks to God" usually found at the end of his manuscripts, is missing from the F Minor Trio and other works of that time.

Dvořák's inner crisis is manifested in the breadth, depth, and emotional content of the trio as well as in its details. The passionate first theme group of the first movement is in two parts like the form of question and answer. A quieter transition leads to the second theme, which bears a remote resemblance to part of the opening theme. The development section concentrates on the question-and-answer themes, leading to a recapitulation that at first emphasizes the "question" motive but eventually reaches the lighter second theme. The very broad coda employs the principal themes in a particularly poignant manner.

Dvořák offers an *Allegro grazioso* in place of the usual scherzo movement. In the main section, a perpetual motion triplet accompaniment in the strings supports a folksong-like duple-rhythm theme in the piano. Later, these roles are reversed. The middle section of the movement presents a pleasant contrast in texture and mood.

The slow movement is more tranquil than those preceding it, but the tone of spiritual suffering is still present in its principal theme. The middle section is marked by a spiky canon between the string parts, the

tension of which finds release in an eloquent, high violin theme. In the coda, the theme reappears, this time in a form that foreshadows the main finale theme of Dvořák's *Symphony No. 7*.

With the vivacious, shifting rhythms of his native *Furiant*, Dvořák takes up the struggle again in the finale. However, this time triumph is in the air. We have the impression that the composer has weathered his period of "Storm and Stress" and has emerged victorious. This is especially apparent when, near the end, he shifts to the major mode and reprises a version of the main theme from the first movement. Concerning the unison ending, Dvořák scholar Otakar Šourek writes that this work, "which sang of a spiritual combat fought out on the battlefield of the composer's soul, must end with the expression of peace-bringing clarification and reconciliation."

PROGRAM NOTES BY DR. MICHAEL FINK  
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## Tempest Trio Ensemble

Combining technical mastery, expressive depth, and performance experience, pianist Alon Goldstein, violinist Ilya Kaler, and cellist Amit Peled have joined forces to form one of the most exciting trios on the international scene. Each virtuoso member of the ensemble has a successful solo career, and together, they bring vitality to the concert stage with their dynamic musical interplay and collaborative spirit.

After only few seasons as a Trio the group has been already compared to the legendary "Million Dollar Trio" of Arthur Rubinstein, Gregor Piatigorsky, and Jascha Heifetz. The Tempest Trio has performed in cities throughout the US, Europe, Israel and Asia. In 2010 the ensemble presented the complete Schumann trios at the renowned Seattle Chamber Music Festival and was immediately invited back the following year to play

the complete Brahms trios. The trio has performed on numerous occasions Beethoven's Triple Concerto to critical acclaim and will soon release its recording of the piece.

As committed pedagogues, the members of the Tempest Trio are all teaching in prestigious universities and summer festivals around the world and share their knowledge, experience and joy of music making through intensive educational residencies, which they offer during each season. The group's debut CD on the Naxos label, featuring the Dvorak Trios, will be released in the spring of 2014.