

Carthage
2009-10 Chamber
MUSIC
series

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Chamber Music Fund of
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Upcoming Chamber Music Series Events

Nov. 13, 2009 • 7:30 p.m.

Ying Quartet

April 1, 2010 • 3 p.m.

Manhattan Bass



The Aspen Ensemble

Oct. 11, 2009 • A. F. Siebert Chapel



Carthage

2001 Alford Park Drive
Kenosha, WI 53140-1994
www.carthage.edu

Program

Please silence all cell phones, watch alarms and pagers before the concert. Program subject to change.

Serenade, Op. 25, for Flute, Violin, and Viola Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Entrata: Allegro
Tempo ordinario d'un Minuetto
Allegro molto
Andante con variazioni
Allegro scherzando e vivace
Adagio; Allegro vivace disinvolto

Trio for Flute, Cello, and Piano Bohuslav Martinů
(1890-1955)

Poco Allegretto
Adagio
Andante: Allegretto scherzando

~ Intermission ~

Quartet for Piano, Violin, Viola and Cello in C minor, Opus 60 Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Allegro non troppo
Scherzo
Andante
Finale

Program Notes

Trio for Flute, Cello and Piano Bohuslav Martinů (1890-1955)

Born in the Bohemian city of Policka (now in the Czech Republic), Bohuslav Martinů lived through the extraordinary turmoil that roiled Europe through the first part of the 20th century. A precocious—although somewhat obstreperous-young music student, Martinů enjoyed a slow-building career as a composer. He was excused from service in World War I, for years earning his living as a violinist in the Czech Philharmonic.

In 1940, he began a 10-month emigration to the United States via France, Spain, and Portugal. In the early 1940s, a series of successful performances of his works by the Boston Symphony Orchestra led to faculty positions at the Berkshire Music Center, the Mannes College of Music, and Princeton University. Martinů was an extremely prolific composer, with 11 operas, six symphonies, several ballets and other orchestral works, numerous concerti, choral works, and some 70 works for assorted chamber ensembles.

The Trio for Flute, Cello, and Piano (arranged by Martinů for flute, viola and piano) was composed in 1944, a period of great creativity spurred on by his Boston Symphony successes. The three movements follow a customary pattern: a quick first movement in sonata form, a lyrical slow movement, and a lively finale.

Serenade, Op. 25 for flute, violin, and viola Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

In his 20s, the unrefined, uneducated, and unkempt Ludwig van Beethoven traveled from his native Bonn to Vienna. While his formal composition studies there with Josef Haydn proved frustrating to both, Beethoven's education was advanced largely through the composition of chamber music: piano trios, string trios, and string quartets.

By the age of 30, after completing his masterful first symphony, with its extended forms and complex instrumentation issues, he returned to the trio form for the Serenade, Op. 25, for flute, violin, and viola.

Serenades became popular in the late 18th century, having developed out of the Italian tradition of informal outdoor evening performances given in the courting process. Lighter in nature, serenades generally consisted of multiple, short, catchy movements.

The Op. 25 Serenade is no exception. The opening March is followed by a playful Minuetto, a syncopated fast third movement, a theme and variations (one for each instrument), and a brief Allegro. Finally, a pensive introduction precedes the final cheerful Rondo.

Piano Quartet in c minor, Op. 60 Johannes Brahms (1833-1896)

Johannes Brahms' chamber music output is widely considered one of the major triumphs of 19th-century Western music. The three quartets for piano, violin, viola, and cello, Op. 25, 26, and 60, are arguably the highest Romantic-era achievements in the genre. The c minor quartet Op. 60, although published last in 1875, probably was started as early as 1855. The years when Brahms was working on this quartet were not his happiest. His champion and mentor, Robert Schumann, died after a long illness in 1856, and he had formed a hopeless amorous attachment to Robert's wife, later widow, Clara Schumann. In a letter to his publisher at the time of the publication of the c minor quartet, Brahms compared himself to Werther, the protagonist of the famous Goethe novel, "The Sorrows of Werther," who took his own life because of his hopeless love for an older married woman. Brahms even suggested to his publisher: "On the cover you must have a picture, a head with a pistol pointed towards it." To a friend, Brahms tried to describe the spirit of the music: "Imagine a man for whom nothing is left, and who wishes to put an end to himself."

The first movement of this dramatic quartet starts with what could be heard as the musical equivalent of a gunshot. The sense of turmoil ranges from vehemence to despair, a perfect description of both the young Werther's feelings as well as those of the young Brahms. The two main themes combine in an expanded idea of sonata form, but the recapitulation is in G Major, rather than the expected c minor, and brings the movement to an end quietly, with no sense of resolution.

The scherzo second movement is strong and intense and, contrary to traditional form, lacks a trio section. A beautiful, sorrowful cello solo opens the third movement, which then becomes a moving duet with the piano. The violin and viola join in and add a second theme, but the opening theme is brought back at the end of the movement with quiet poignancy. The fourth movement finale brings back the turmoil of the first movement. Descending figures in both the piano and the strings, while alluding to the cello theme of the previous movement, are full of disquiet. The constant piano figurations support the first melody and the second, chorale-like theme while helping to bring the movement and the entire quartet to its end. As if Brahms wanted to deny a dark c minor ending, his last two chords are in C Major. However, it is the haunting darkness of the music which continues to linger long afterwards.

Aspen Ensemble

From the famed Aspen Music Festival come five acclaimed musicians united in their love for chamber music and their desire to bring unique, exciting programs to audiences around the world.

This quintet is one of the most innovative and exceptional chamber groups performing today. In a few short seasons, the Aspen Ensemble already has established a winning reputation with audiences and presenters nationally and internationally. The ensemble is in residence at the University of Baltimore.

The Aspen Ensemble includes violinist David Perry, violist Victoria Chiang, cellist Michael Mermagen, flutist Nadine Asin, and pianist Rita Sloan—all highly regarded solo artists.

Violinist David Perry has appeared as soloist with the Chicago and St. Louis symphony orchestras, among others. For many years concertmaster of the Aspen Chamber Orchestra, he is first violinist with the Pro Arte Quartet and concertmaster of the Chicago Philharmonic. A regular concertmaster of—and soloist with—the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Mr. Perry is Artist-in-Residence and Professor of Violin at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Mr. Perry's recording of concertos by Ignaz Pleyel with the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra was released recently to acclaim on the Naxos label.

Violist Victoria Chiang is an active performer as soloist, recitalist, and chamber musician. Her recording of viola concertos by Stamitz and Hoffmeister with the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra on the Naxos label is due out in 2010; her recording of Ignaz Pleyel's Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola, also on the Naxos label, was released in 2009 to critical acclaim, and her recording of viola sonatas by Shostakovich and Roslavets was awarded a "strong recommendation" by Fanfare magazine. A member of the artist-faculty of the Peabody Conservatory and the Aspen Music Festival, she has collaborated as guest artist with the Guarneri, Takács, Tokyo, Pro Arte and American String Quartets.

Cellist Michael Mermagen made his debut at the age of sixteen with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra after being the recipient of its Young Soloist's Award. He was a soloist with the National Orchestra of New York, where he held the prestigious Emanuel Feuermann principal cello chair. He also performed in the Violoncello Society of New York Master Classes led by Yo-Yo Ma, János Starker, and Bernard Greenhouse. Currently a member of the artist-faculty of the Benjamin Rome School of Music of the Catholic University, his chamber music appearances have included tours with the Aspen Ensemble, the American Chamber Players, and the Arista Piano Trio. As an artist-faculty member at the Aspen Music Festival and School, he has been principal cellist of the Aspen Chamber Symphony for nearly twenty seasons. He has been heard on WQXR's Concerts Plus, WNYC's Around New York, APM's Performance Today, and "A Prairie Home Companion" with Garrison Keillor.

Flutist Nadine Asin has performed with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Da Camera Society of Houston, the New York Philharmonic, and the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. Currently on the faculty of the Aspen Music Festival, where she is principal flutist of the Aspen Festival Orchestra, she has taught previously at the Cincinnati Conservatory and SUNY at Purchase.

Rita Sloan has performed at New York's Bargemusic, the Seattle Chamber Music Festival, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra chamber music series, and the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra chamber music series. She is a member of the piano faculties at the University of Maryland and the Aspen Music Festival.