

Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth

presents

Ensemble Schumann

Thomas Gallant, oboe

Steve Larson, viola

Sally Pinkas, piano

Sunday, April 14, 2 pm

Rollins Chapel • Dartmouth College • 2024

We thank Mrs. Selma Bornstein for her generous donation of the Petrof Concert Grand Piano, given in loving memory of her husband Dr. Murray Bornstein and used for today's concert.

Program

Approximate duration: 60 minutes

Sarabande and Rigaudon

Arthur Foote (1853–1937)

Trio in B-Flat Major, Op. 11 “Gassenhauer”

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. Adagio
- III. Tema con variazioni: “Pria ch’io l’Impegno.” Allegretto

Introduction and Dance

Michael White (1921–2022)

Selections from Eight Pieces, Op. 83

Max Bruch (1838–1920)

- I. Andante
- II. Allegro con moto
- III. Andante con moto
- IV. Allegro agitato

Program Notes

Arthur Foote

Sarabande and Rigaudon

Arthur Foote was born in Salem, Massachusetts, on March 5, 1853; he died in Boston on April 8, 1937. He wrote his Sarabande and Rigaudon for oboe (or flute), viola (or violin) and piano in 1921.

Arthur Foote was the first successful concert music composer educated entirely in the U.S. He studied at the (then-brand-new) New England Conservatory and at Harvard, where his was the first music MA granted in the country. A well-established pianist and organist, Foote nevertheless remained embarrassed of his own abilities, regarding himself unworthy against the European composers (Beethoven and Brahms especially) he revered. The impostor-syndrome modesty of his character jibes with his reserved approach to music. Stylistically, his is straightforwardly lyrical writing, meticulously balanced, subtle rather than flashy. Classical

symmetry tempers a heartfelt Romanticism in the melody while Baroque inspiration grounds rhythm and form in a sturdy architecture. With the glimmer of occasional modal touches, his works sound as levelheaded meditations on something ancient.

Foote’s Sarabande and Rigaudon presents two brief neo-Baroque courtly dances. Eloquent lyricism from the oboe and viola prevails, while the piano accepts a more subdued role. There’s some archaism and mystery to the second dance’s main material, and a bit of spritely mischief in the middle, but this is gentle music to its core, with each dance capped by a tender coda.

Ludwig van Beethoven

Trio in B-flat major, Op. 11 “Gassenhauer”

Ludwig van Beethoven was born in Bonn on December 16, 1770, and died in Vienna on March 26, 1827. He composed his Op. 11 trio, originally

for clarinet (or violin), cello and piano, in 1797, publishing it the following year with a dedication to the countess Maria Wilhelmine von Thun.

In 1797, Beethoven was hitting his stride in Vienna, having given his first Viennese public performances and published his first opus-numbered works only two years prior. Undaunted by recurring bouts of illness, he aspired to nothing less than the highest level of musicianship, the approval of the wealthiest and noblest patrons, and the ears of the largest concertgoing audiences. He looked to Mozart as a model, aiming to pick up where the Austrian had left off upon his too-early death at the beginning of the decade. Mozart had sparked a late-Classical vogue for chamber works pairing reeds with strings with his “Kegelstatt” clarinet-violin-piano trio of 1786 as well as the clarinet quintet of 1791. Beethoven with his Op. 11 opted for a trio of clarinet, cello and piano, dedicating the work to Maria Wilhelmine von Thun, herself a top-notch keyboardist and a former Mozart patron.

But the Op. 11 is no Mozart trio. It’s a real *piano* trio, and a Beethoven piano trio—and that means virtuosity. The piano is the master of ceremonies here, simultaneously undergirding the architecture and stealing the scene at every turn to demonstrate dazzlingly difficult gestures. The opening Allegro is a sturdy B-flat sonata with a lofty codetta heralding a development section in distant D-flat, placid and spacious at first, soon storming off into thunderous piano arpeggios. For the central Adagio in E-flat, the clarinet (today, oboe) and cello (viola) take duet turns with the keyboard, separated by some noble passages for solo piano. Each is more lyrical than the last, and the final return of the viola’s main theme, now with a soaring oboe descant, is sweetest of all. The Allegretto offers a set of flashy variations on a theme (“Pria ch’io l’impegno”) from a popular new opera by Joseph Weigl. Apparently ubiquitously sung and whistled on Viennese streets

(Gassen) that year, this was a real street tune—a Gassenhauer earworm known to all.

Program notes above © 2024 Grant Cook ’19

Michael White **Introduction and Dance**

Michael White was born on March 6, 1931, in Chicago, and died in New York City on January 24, 2022. He wrote his Introduction and Dance for Ensemble Schumann in 2015. The composer’s notes on the work are provided below.

This work, written for Ensemble Schumann in 2015, concentrates on the differences rather than the similarities between the three instruments. The emphasis, then, is on the very contrasting colors produced by a wind instrument, a string instrument, and a keyboard. The Introduction is a slow, lyrical duet for the oboe and the viola, and is followed immediately by the fast, rhythmically exciting Dance. This new section uses constantly shifting meters, jazz inflections, and imitative counterpoint between all three instruments. In the final minute of the work, the oboe and viola drop out, leaving the piano to finish alone—literally fading into nothingness.

© 2015 Michael White

Max Bruch **Selections from Eight Pieces, Op. 83**

Max Bruch was born in Cologne on January 6, 1838, and died on October 2, 1920, in Berlin. He composed his Eight Pieces, originally for clarinet, viola (or cello), and piano, in 1909–10 for his clarinetist son Max Felix. Performed today are the first four pieces of the eight.

Max Bruch, known above all (even in his lifetime, much to his chagrin) for his immensely popular G-minor violin concerto, was a musical traditionalist. His outspoken antipathy to the tonality-stretching extremes of Wagner and Liszt, let alone to the

Program Notes *continued*

innovations of the 20th century into which he so incongruously survived, left him isolated and neglected as a composer in his final decades. But he held fast to an abiding adoration of Mendelssohn and Schumann, preserving the attitude of mid-19th century German art music and its Romantic nationalist trappings, all the while refining his brilliant knack for melody and orchestration.

Don't be fooled by the small footprint: These brief Eight Pieces for trio are formidable in their emotional scope, nearly orchestral in their color palette. The opening Andante tells us what to expect from these bite-size tone poems: deeply serious

atmospheres and superbly tuneful melodies, each handed between instruments treated as equally solistic partners, each meticulously orchestrated and doubled to draw out colors of symphonic subtlety. The third piece, marked Andante con moto, is the most ambitious of all: a whole drama in three acts juxtaposing a stone-stern viola concerto in miniature with a gently rippling clarinet (today, oboe) sonata. The two collide; the grim viola attempts an overthrow! But the serenity of the woodwind song is unshakable. Transformed, the viola joins, and the trio soars heavenward.

Program notes © 2024 Grant Cook '19

About the Artists

A dazzling, colorful trio of soloists, the members of **Ensemble Schumann**, Thomas Gallant, oboe, Steve Larson, viola, and Sally Pinkas, piano, present works by their namesake Robert Schumann, as well as by Brahms, Saint-Saëns, Loeffler, Poulenc, Shostakovich and others. Gallant, Larson and Pinkas have each performed at notable venues, including Lincoln Center, the Frick Collection and Carnegie Hall in New York City, Jordan Hall in Boston, Wigmore Hall in London, the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, and the festivals at Tanglewood, Ravinia, Lucerne, Spoleto and Mostly Mozart. Performing together since 2005, Ensemble Schumann has been featured at the prestigious Da Camera Series in Los Angeles, at the Clark Art Museum in Massachusetts and on Live From Fraser on WGBH Radio in Boston. Recent seasons have included performances for the Stockton Friends of Music in California, Mount Vernon Museum of Art and Principia College in Illinois, Cornell College in Iowa, Auburn Chamber Music Society in Alabama, Washington University Chamber Series in St. Louis, Young Auditorium in Whitewater,

Wisconsin, Strathmore Hall in Maryland, Big Arts on Sanibel Island, The Forum in St. Thomas, and appearances in Iowa, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas and Georgia. Ensemble Schumann's recordings on the MSR Classics label have received high praise in such publications as *Gramophone*, *Fanfare* and *Audiophile Audition*.

Thomas Gallant is a First Prize Winner of the Concert Artists Guild International New York Competition and one of very few musicians ever to win the competition as an oboe soloist. His performances have taken him to David Geffen Hall, Weill Recital Hall, Morgan Library and the Frick Collection in New York City, to Washington, DC, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, to the Spoleto Festival in Italy and to the Mostly Mozart Festival at Lincoln Center. He has appeared as guest soloist with the Kronos Quartet at the Ravinia Festival and has collaborated with flutist Jean-Pierre Rampal, with Cuarteto Casals from Spain, the Colorado, Tesla, Calder and Lark Quartets, Cuarteto Latinoamericano and with the Adaskin String Trio.

Recent and upcoming performances include a concert of solo and chamber music works for the oboe at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, tours across the United States as soloist with Camerata Bariloche from Argentina and the String Orchestra of New York City performing concerti by J. S. Bach and Vaughan-Williams as well as tours of Europe and China. Thomas Gallant is dedicated to performing neglected and contemporary works for the oboe and has given the New York premieres of works for oboe and strings by Berio and Penderecki as well as the Washington, DC premiere of Elliott Carter's Quartet for oboe and strings. He is a member of the trio Ensemble Schumann and the Artistic Director of the chamber music group Frisson. He lives in New York City.

Violist **Steve Larson**'s playing has been described as "supercharged, clear-headed, yet soulful" (*Boston Globe*). He has performed with the Adaskin String Trio since 1994, and with the oboe, viola and piano trio, Ensemble Schumann, since 2005. The Adaskin's complete *String Trios of Beethoven* was hailed by *Gramophone* as "riveting" and "intoxicating," while Ensemble Schumann's *Romantic Trios* was described by *Fanfare Magazine* as making "some of the most blissful sounds this side of nirvana... exquisite music, exquisitely played." Larson and his wife, violinist Annie Trépanier, perform together as a duo and as members of Connecticut-based Cuatro Puntos Ensemble, renowned for its dynamic playing and for using music as a stimulus for social change. Cuatro Puntos' activities have included partnerships with local arts and social organizations, concerts in South America and Europe, and exciting collaborations with artists and organizations from Turkey, Afghanistan, Iraq, the UK and India. Larson is a former member of the Alcan Quartet and Avery Ensemble, and has performed as a guest with groups such as the Emerson Quartet and the Lions Gate Trio. Originally from Saskatchewan, he

won second prize and the special award for his performance of the commissioned work at the 1997 Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition in the UK. He is Principal Viola at the Wintergreen Festival in Virginia, and is a Senior Artist Teacher at The Hartt School (University of Hartford), where he has served as Chair for Strings and Chair of Chamber Music.

Following her London debut at Wigmore Hall, Israeli-born pianist **Sally Pinkas** has garnered universal acclaim as soloist and chamber musician. Among highlights are performances with the Boston Pops, the Aspen Philharmonia, New York's Jupiter Symphony and the festivals at Marlboro, Aspen, Rockport, Pontlevoy (France), Havana (Cuba) and HCMC Conservatory (Vietnam). In 2019 she made her solo debut with the Bandung Symphony in Indonesia, and appeared in recitals in Spain and Brazil. Pinkas tours regularly as member of the Hirsch-Pinkas Duo (with her husband pianist Evan Hirsch) and Ensemble Schumann, and with the Adaskin String Trio. Other recent collaborators include the Apple Hill String Quartet, Cuarteto Latinoamericano and the UK's Villiers Quartet. Praised for her radiant tone and driving energy, Pinkas' extensive discography includes music by Mozart, Schumann, Fauré, Debussy, Gaubert, Martinů, Shapiro, Pinkham and Wolff for the MSR, Centaur, Naxos, Toccata Classics and Mode labels. Her most recent CD release of Sonatas by Shostakovich and Bridge was hailed as "A mandatory purchase for all pianophiles: two major works, in performances of utter power... ideal melding of strength and emotional pliancy..." by *Fanfare Magazine*. She holds performance degrees from Indiana University and the New England Conservatory of Music, and a PhD in Composition from Brandeis University. Pianist-in-residence at the Hopkins Center at Dartmouth College, she is Professor of Music at Dartmouth's Music Department.

Arts in the Curriculum & Community

As part of the Hop's tradition of immersing artists in the community to build knowledge and create connections, during their time at Dartmouth, Ensemble Schumann will visit a class in the Music Department, conduct a master class for students in the Dartmouth College Wind Ensemble, and present a house concert with dinner and discussion for students in South House and West House.

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