

POLONSKY-SHIFRIN-WILEY TRIO

ANNA POLONSKY, piano
DAVID SHIFRIN, clarinet
PETER WILEY, cello

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
(1770-1827)

Trio in B-flat Major, Op. 11
Allegro con brio
Adagio
Tema: Pria ch'io l'impegno. Allegretto

PAQUITO D'RIVERA
(b. 1948)

Danzón for clarinet, cello, and piano

NINO ROTA
(1911-1979)

Trio for clarinet, cello, and piano
Allegro
Andante
Allegrissimo

INTERMISSION

JOHANNES BRAHMS
(1833-1897)

**Trio in A Minor for clarinet, cello,
and piano, Op. 114**
Allegro
Adagio
Andantino grazioso
Allegro



POLONSKY-SHIFRIN-WILEY TRIO

**ANNA
POLONSKY,** *piano*

DAVID SHIFRIN,
clarinet

PETER WILEY, *cello*

Upon receiving Chamber Music America's Richard J. Bogomolny National Service Award in 2018, an award recognizing an individual who has provided historic service to the chamber music field, David Shifrin announced the formation of a new trio with the distinguished cellist Peter Wiley and the rising star pianist Anna Polonsky. **The Polonsky-Shifrin-Wiley Trio** made its debut at Dumbarton Oaks in February 2019. Highlights of their ongoing touring schedule include the Candlelight Concerts in Connecticut, Classic Chamber Concerts in Florida, the Chamber Music Societies in Detroit, Philadelphia, and Phoenix, the Fontana Chamber Music Society, Yale and Clemson Universities, UCLA, and Market Square Concerts in Harrisburg.

Pianist Anna Polonsky is widely in demand as a soloist and chamber musician. She has appeared with the Moscow Virtuosi, the Buffalo Philharmonic, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Columbus Symphony Orchestra, the Memphis Symphony, the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, the St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble, and many others. Ms. Polonsky has collaborated with the Guarneri, Orion, Daedalus, and Shanghai quartets, and with such musicians as Mitsuko Uchida, Yo-Yo Ma, David Shifrin, Richard Goode, Emanuel Ax, Arnold Steinhardt, Peter Wiley, and Jaime Laredo. She has performed chamber music at festivals such as Marlboro, Chamber Music Northwest, Seattle, Music@Menlo, Cartagena, Bard, and Caramoor, as well as at Bargemusic in New York City. Ms. Polonsky has given concerts in the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the Vienna Konzerthaus, Alice Tully Hall, and Carnegie Hall's Stern, Weill, and Zankel halls, and has toured extensively throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia.

A frequent guest at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Ms. Polonsky was a member of the Chamber Music Society Two during 2002-2004. In 2006 she took part in the European Broadcasting Union's project to

record and broadcast all of Mozart's keyboard sonatas, and in 2007 she performed a solo recital at Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium to inaugurate the Emerson Quartet's Perspectives Series. She is a recipient of a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship and the Andrew Wolf Chamber Music Award.

Anna Polonsky made her solo piano debut at the age of seven at the Special Central Music School in Moscow, Russia. She emigrated to the United States in 1990, and attended high school at the Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan. She received her Bachelor of Music diploma from The Curtis Institute of Music under renowned pianist Peter Serkin, and continued her studies with Jerome Lowenthal, earning her Master's degree from the Juilliard School. In addition to performing, she serves on the piano faculty of Vassar College, and in the summer at the Marlboro and Kneisel Hall chamber music festivals. Ms. Polonsky is a Steinway Artist.

A Yale University faculty member since 1987, **clarinetist David Shifrin** is artistic director of Yale's Chamber Music Society series and Yale in New York, a concert series at Carnegie Hall. He has performed with the Chamber Music Society since 1982 and served as its artistic director from 1992 to 2004, inaugurating The Bowers Program (then called CMS Two) and the annual Brandenburg Concerto concerts. He concluded his tenure with Chamber Music Northwest in Portland, Oregon in summer 2020 after having been the festival's Artistic Director since 1981. He is currently Artistic Director of the Phoenix Chamber Music Festival.

He has collaborated with the Guarneri, Tokyo, and Emerson quartets, and frequently performed with pianist André Watts. Winner of the Avery Fisher Prize, he is also the recipient of a Solo Recitalist Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. A top prize winner in competitions throughout the world, including Munich, Geneva, and San Francisco, he has held principal clarinet positions in The Cleveland Orchestra and the American Symphony under Leopold Stokowski. His recordings have received three Grammy nominations and his performance

of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto with the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra was named Record of the Year by *Stereo Review*. He has also released two CDs of Lalo Schifrin's compositions, one of which was nominated for a Latin Grammy. New Delos recording releases in 2017 included Carl Nielsen's clarinet concert in a chamber version by Rene Orth and a volume of quintets for clarinet and strings with the Miró, Dover, and Jasper quartets of music by Peter Schickele, Richard Danielpour, and Aaron J. Kernis.

Cellist Peter Wiley enjoys a prolific career as a performer and teacher. He attended the Curtis Institute at just 13 years old under David Soyer, and he continued his impressive youthful accomplishments with his appointment as principal cellist of the Cincinnati Symphony at age 20, after one year with the Pittsburgh Symphony. From 1987 through 1998, Mr. Wiley was cellist of the Beaux Arts Trio, with which he performed over a thousand concerts, including appearances with many of the world's greatest orchestras. He succeeded his mentor, David Soyer, as cellist of the Guarneri Quartet from 2001 until the quartet retired from the concert stage in 2009.

Awarded an Avery Fisher Career Grant, Mr. Wiley was also nominated for a Grammy Award in 1998 with the Beaux Arts Trio and in 2009 with the Guarneri Quartet. He has also had a close association with the Marlboro Music Festival for over 40 years.

A much sought-after teacher, Peter Wiley has been a faculty artist at Caramoor's "Rising Stars" program and taught at the Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music, Mannes College of Music, and Manhattan School of Music. He is currently on the faculty of the Curtis Institute of Music and the Bard College Conservatory of Music.

The Polonsky-Shifrin-Wiley Trio is represented by BesenArts LLC, 7 Delaney Place, Tenafly, NJ 07670-1607.

IN BRIEF

BORN: December 17, 1770, Bonn, Germany

DIED: March 26, 1827, Vienna, Austria

DEDICATION: Countess von Thun

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: January 15, 1975, Tashi

DURATION: 21 minutes

NOTES

LUDWIG VAN
BEETHOVEN: TRIO
IN B-FLAT MAJOR,
OP. 11

We think of Beethoven as a composer of intense drama and striking contrasts, a composer who wrote music that demands we sit up and take notice. This comparatively early trio shows us another side of Beethoven's personality: ingratiating, good-humored, and unconcerned with the world's troubles. In fact, the lighter nature of the Op. 11 trio has caused it to be somewhat neglected, as musicians and audiences tend to seek out Beethoven's more dramatic works. There is certainly room in our world for both styles.

Beethoven composed this trio in 1798 with sheer entertainment value in mind. But entertainment is not to be confused with ease of execution. Critics in Beethoven's day acknowledged the difficulty of the piece, one even accusing him of writing "unnaturally." From an historical standpoint, the Op. 11 trio is important as an early exercise in pre-orchestration. Beethoven's original instrumentation called for clarinet or violin, cello, and piano. Clarinet was still a comparatively new instrument, and only beginning to find its way into the chamber literature. Beethoven had not yet composed a symphony, and this type of ensemble writing gave him experience at handling different instrument combinations. Furthermore, allowing for performance of the upper part by either clarinet or violin meant that the piece was accessible to more potential performers.

The piece's three movements are cast in familiar forms. Characteristically, Beethoven grabs our attention with his unison opening, and proceeds with a fine sonata form first movement. He migrates to a conventional second theme in F-major by means of D-major and G-minor, a nice

and surprising touch that looks forward to a favorite Schubertian harmonic ploy. In the slow movement, an Adagio, the cello takes the musical spotlight. Its theme is usually compared to the well-known melody of the minuets from the Piano Sonatina in G, Op. 49 no. 2, and the analogous movement in the famous Septet, Op. 20.

The trio's standout movement is its finale, a set of variations on a theme from Joseph Weigl's opera *L'amor marinaro* (1797). The tune was well known to Beethoven's audience and was later used by several other composers, including Hummel and Paganini. Op. 11 became known as Beethoven's *Gassenhauer* ("Street Song") Trio, because Weigl's tune was so ubiquitous. Beethoven thought highly of this movement. According to his student Carl Czerny, he considered releasing the variations as a separate work, and composing an alternate finale for the trio.

The first variation is for piano solo, and then Beethoven gives the two strings an unaccompanied duo. Thenceforth the three instruments share the material equally, including two *minore* variations that barely suppress the upbeat atmosphere of Weigl's theme. For the coda, Beethoven switches meter to 6/8 and throws in a couple of key-change surprises. The finale leaves us with a sense of melodious joy that is surprisingly Schubertian, without sacrificing Beethoven's inimitable sense of texture and pianism.

PAQUITO D'RIVERA:
DANZÓN FOR
CLARINET, CELLO,
AND PIANO

IN BRIEF

BORN: 1948, Havana, Cuba

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: Tonight marks the first performance of this work on our series.

DURATION: 5 minutes

Paquito D'Rivera is a Cuban clarinetist, saxophonist, and composer. His father was a classical saxophonist

and Paquito's first teacher. The boy was a musical prodigy, performing on stage and for radio and TV starting at age six. He studied at Havana's Conservatory and founded his first band in 1961. Bandleader Leonardo Timor introduced D'Rivera to the arrangements of Woody Herman, Duke Ellington, Stan Kenton, and Count Basie, expanding his horizons. By the late 1960s D'Rivera was touring in Eastern Europe with his *Quinteto Cubano de Jazz*. He defected from Cuba to Spain in 1980 and relocated permanently to the USA in 1981. D'Rivera has received multiple Grammy awards and was the first Latin musician to receive the NEA's Jazz Master award.

He has a flexible and original approach to both harmony and rhythm. His works inhabit their own sound world, with modernist touches commingling effortlessly with the jazz and Cuban popular elements he has assimilated. His music reflects myriad passions: jazz and swing, Cuban folk music, Argentinian tango and *milonga*, borderline atonal dissonance, and good old-fashioned boogie-woogie. The resulting compositions are a feast for the senses.

Danzón is a Cuban dance and music genre with origins in the late 19th century. It was hugely popular in the mid-20th century and recurs in more recent works influenced by the Latin ballroom tradition. Most *danzóns* feature a recurring refrain that gives the piece a structure like a rondo. The vogue for *danzóns* spread to other Latin countries, including Mexico and the Central American diaspora.

D'Rivera's *Danzón* is five minutes of pure Latin joy. Freely navigating between leisurely and up-tempo sections, he entrusts most of the melodic material to the clarinet and cello, treating the piano as a rhythm section. The piano's underpinning is essential to the piece, seamlessly transitioning those sections and imbuing the music with its Afro-Cuban character. D'Rivera's melodies are captivating, and his catchy rhythms are sure to inspire audience foot-tapping.

NINO ROTA: TRIO
FOR CLARINET,
CELLO, AND PIANO

IN BRIEF

BORN: December 3, 1911, Milan, Italy

DIED: April 10, 1979, Rome, Italy

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: Tonight marks the first performance of this work on our series.

DURATION: 15 minutes

If you think you've never heard Nino Rota's music, you are probably mistaken. Did you see Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* in 1968? Or the first two parts of Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* (1972 and 1974)? Rota composed the soundtracks for all three films.

He was best known for his collaborations with the legendary Federico Fellini, including the scores for such classics as *La strada* (1954), *La dolce vita* (1963), *8½* (1963), *Juliet of the Spirits* (1965), and *Amarcord* (1973). Rota also worked with Luchino Visconti (*The Leopard*, 1963) and other prominent directors on more than 150 films.

His training was classical. His grandfather was the composer and pianist Giovanni Rinaldi; his mother, also a pianist, was his first teacher. At age 15, Rota moved to Rome to continue his formal education with Alfredo Casella.

Several years later, at the recommendation of the conductor Arturo Toscanini, Rota traveled to America to study with the legendary Rosario Scalerò at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute. Rota also studied conducting at Curtis with Fritz Reiner and forged a close friendship with the young Aaron Copland. Through Copland, he fostered an enthusiasm for popular music and Broadway shows.

His early career in Italy was heavily weighted toward concert music, including chamber and orchestral works. Rota felt a strong connection with the music of the past and was a proponent of the Eastern European symphonic

tradition, especially the works of Tchaikovsky and Dvořák. His gift was fusing these elements with a strong populist strain, an approach that put Rota squarely at odds with contemporary Italian currents. Despite his wonderful lyric sense, he was soon deemed out of the mainstream and hopelessly old-fashioned.

After the Second World War, however, Rota's stock as a film composer was rising. He found his niche combining teaching with film composition. From 1950 to 1977, he directed the Bari Conservatory and pursued composition primarily—but not exclusively—in film.

He composed the Trio that appears on this evening's program in 1973. Though firmly grounded in traditional tonality, Rota is more adventurous in his harmonies, switching freely from one measure to the next. The opening *Allegro* alternates pulsating piano with swirling arpeggio figures, with most of the melodic weight in the clarinet and cello. But he achieves a nice balance among the three players, and the piano has a couple of solo passages taking its turn with the themes.

The central *Andante* is a melancholy waltz, again showcasing clarinet and cello in dialogue. The form is a ternary A-B-A structure, with the central B-section introducing a crescendo that builds to more agitated music before a unison recapitulation of the opening theme. Rota's conclusion is quiet and mysterious.

A transformative change dominates the *Allegrissimo* finale. Motoric and *giocoso*, this movement has a distinct French flavor reminiscent of Francis Poulenc and Jean Françaix. It shows Rota in a playful, witty mood. His structure is A-B-A'-B'-A, using a more expansive theme in the contrasting B sections. Rota's distribution of his madcap material is masterful, like championship table tennis volleys, but among three players. The irresistible forward momentum of perpetual motion drives the trio to a brilliant *prestissimo* close.

JOHANNES
BRAHMS: TRIO
IN A MINOR FOR
CLARINET, CELLO,
AND PIANO, OP. 114

IN BRIEF

BORN: May 7, 1833, Hamburg, Germany

DIED: April 3, 1897, Vienna, Austria

FIRST PERFORMANCE: December 12, 1891, Berlin, Saal der Singakademie

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: March 1, 2006, Spoleto Festival USA Chamber Music

DURATION: 26 minutes

During a visit to Meiningen in March 1891, 58-year-old Johannes Brahms heard the Duke of Meiningen's orchestra perform several concerts. One included a Weber Clarinet Concerto, another Mozart's Clarinet Quintet. In both performances, Brahms was entranced by the playing of the soloist Richard Mühlfeld, the Duke's principal clarinetist. Brahms and Mühlfeld struck up a friendship and musical collaboration that led to four splendid works of chamber music: the so-called Clarinet Quintet (for clarinet and string quartet) Op. 115, the Trio on this program, and the two late Sonatas for Clarinet and Piano, Op. 120, in 1894. These four works were Brahms's final contribution to the chamber literature and are often called the finest examples of his remarkable later years as a composer.

Throughout modern musical history, scholars have drawn parallels to two other composers inspired by clarinetists relatively late in their careers. Anton Stadler stimulated Mozart's imagination to compose the wonderful Clarinet Quintet, K.581 and the Clarinet Concerto, K.622. Doubtless Stadler's playing also influenced Mozart's scoring in the late piano concerti and symphonies. In the 1810s, Carl Maria von Weber was captivated by the artistry of clarinetist Heinrich Baermann, for whom he wrote two concerti and other major works.

Clarinetists are understandably grateful for this incomparable legacy. Their instrument is relatively young.

(Mozart wasn't actually composing for clarinet as we know it, but rather for basset horn, a related predecessor.) Most clarinetists will cite these three composers—Mozart, Weber, and Brahms—as the greatest exponents of their instrument before the 20th century. The four late Brahms works hold a special place in their hearts.

Curiously, the Trio has traditionally taken a back seat to the more famous Quintet. In comparing the two, Brahms's biographer Hans Gál acknowledged:

Both contain pages among the most formally accomplished and most impressive that Brahms has ever written. But it is impossible not to sense that this is the music of an old man expressing the mild melancholy of retrospection and resignation.

May we all be so articulate in our own later years! The Trio's scale is modest in comparison to the Quintet and other mature chamber works by Brahms. Although it consists of four movements, the last two each last less than five minutes. Furthermore, there is virtually no *Sturm und Drang* in this trio. Brahms makes his points via gentle persuasion, rather than through bombast or drama.

Although this Trio has traditionally been referred to as the "Clarinet Trio," it would be a mistake to underestimate the role of the cello. Indeed, the cello opens the first movement and often presents new thematic material. The cello frequently participates in a duet with the clarinet, rather than in a subordinate role. If any of the trio's participants takes a back seat, it is the pianist, whose role is decidedly more subsidiary than in most of Brahms's chamber music. Brahms emphasizes the color world of the clarinet and cello throughout the trio. There are lovely, subtle moments when the melody switches from clarinet to cello and back, almost as if they were an extension of one another instead of members of different instrument families.

- Program Notes by Laurie Shulman ©2023

PIANO SERIES

MICHELLE CANN, PIANO

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Karen Slack, soprano

Wed, Jan 17, 2024 | 7:30 pm

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Wed, Mar 20, 2024 | 7:30 pm

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Wed, Apr 10, 2024 | 7:30 pm

TAKT Trio (*special event*)

Fri, Apr 19, 2024 | 7:30 pm

Les Violons Du Roy with MILOŠ

Thu, May 9, 2024 | 7:30 pm

PIANO SERIES

Michelle Cann, piano

Wed, Oct 4, 2023 | 7:30 pm

Jeremy Denk, piano

Wed, Dec 13, 2023 | 7:30 pm

Beatrice Rana, piano

Tue, Feb 20, 2024 | 7:30 pm

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SUN, NOV 12, 2023

12:00 and 1:00 PM (identical concerts)

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