

TAKT TRIO

DAVID BYRD-MARROW, horn
CONOR HANICK, piano
AUSTIN WULLIMAN, violin

HILDA PAREDES
(b. 1957)

Koan for violin, horn, and piano

GYÖRGY LIGETI
(1923-2006)

Trio for violin, horn, and piano
Andantino con tenerezza
Vivacissimo molto ritmico
Alla marcia
Lamento. Adagio

INTERMISSION

JOHANNES BRAHMS
(1833-1897)

Horn Trio in E-flat Major, Op. 40
Andante
Scherzo. Allegro
Adagio mesto
Allegro con brio

*Tonight's concert is co-presented with the Robert & Judi Newman Center
for the Performing Arts and DU's Lamont School of Music.*



Robert & Judi Newman Center
for the Performing Arts



Lamont School of Music
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER



**DAVID
BYRD-MARROW**

DAVID BYRD-MARROW, HORN

Hailed as “stunning and assured” by the *New York Times*, Atlanta native David Byrd-Marrow is the solo hornist of the International Contemporary Ensemble, as well as a member of The Knights. Working with a uniquely wide range of performers, he has premiered works by Matthias Pintscher, Arthur Kampela, George Lewis, Tyshawn Sorey, Anna Thorvaldsdottir, Du Yun, Marcos Balter, Anna Webber, Jörg Widmann, Miguel Zenón, and Chick Corea. He has performed at festivals including the Ojai Music Festival, the Spoleto Music Festival, the Mostly Mozart Festival, the Tanglewood Music Center, and Summerfest! at the La Jolla Music Society, and as faculty at the Festival Napa Valley. Formerly a member of Carnegie Hall’s Ensemble Connect, he has also appeared with the New York Philharmonic, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Atlanta, Seattle, and Tokyo Symphony Orchestras, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra, the Washington National Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. He has recorded on many labels including Tundra, More Is More, Nonesuch, EMI, Deutsche Grammophon, and Naxos. Byrd-Marrow received his bachelor’s degree from The Juilliard School and his master’s from Stony Brook University. He is Assistant Professor of Horn at the Lamont School of Music, University of Denver.

Photo by Laura Dieberg



CONOR HANICK

CONOR HANICK, PIANO

Pianist Conor Hanick is regarded as one of his generation’s most inquisitive interpreters of music new and old whose “technical refinement, color, crispness and wondrous variety of articulation benefit works by any master.” (*New York Times*) Hanick has recently performed with the San Francisco Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Alabama Symphony, Orchestra Iowa, and the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, been presented by the Gilmore Festival, New York Philharmonic, Elbphilharmonie, De Singel, Caramoor, Cal Performances, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, and the Park Avenue Armory, and worked with conductors Esa-Pekka Salonen, Ludovic Morlot, Alan Gilbert, and David Robertson.

A fierce advocate for the music of today, Hanick has premiered over 200 pieces and collaborated with composers ranging from Pierre Boulez, Kaija Saariaho, and Steve

Reich, to the leading composers of his generation, including Nico Muhly, Caroline Shaw, Tyshawn Sorey, Samuel Carl Adams, and Anthony Cheung. This season Hanick presents recitals in the US and Europe, including performances with Julia Bullock, Jay Campbell, Joshua Roman, Seth Parker Woods, AMOC* (American Modern Opera Company), and the Takt Trio. Hanick also makes his San Francisco Performances debut at Herbst Theater, joins Sandbox Percussion at 92NY, returns to the Aix-en-Provence Festival, and, in Ojai as part of the California Festival, performs a new set of piano etudes by Samuel Carl Adams, whose piano concerto *No Such Spring* Hanick premiered last year to wide acclaim with the San Francisco Symphony and Esa-Pekka Salonen.

Hanick is the director of Solo Piano at the Music Academy of the West and serves on the faculty of The Juilliard School, Mannes College, and the CUNY Graduate Center, and is a founding member of AMOC*.

AUSTIN WULLIMAN, VIOLIN

Violinist, composer, and educator Austin Wulliman embodies the imagined and empathizes with the absurd through sounds both familiar and radical, telling stories with a limitless passion for tuning cries from every corner of the human capacity to hear. He is a member of JACK Quartet, called “the nation’s most important quartet” by the *New York Times*, recipient of the Avery Fisher Career Grant, Musical America’s Ensemble of the Year, and performing at the Berlin Philharmonie, Vienna Konzerthaus, and Carnegie Hall as well as teaching at the Banff Centre, Lucerne Festival, and the Mannes School of Music.

As soloist, Wulliman has given the American premiere of works by Kaija Saariaho and played at the Southbank Centre, Aspen Music Festival, and Wigmore Hall. He has collaborated with a panoply of composers and performers, advocating for the music of now, ranging from the likes of Philip Glass, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Conrad Tao, Tyshawn Sorey, Barbara Hannigan and John Zorn. His debut album as composer, *The News From Utopia*, was released in fall of 2023.



Photo by Ameliese Vardiev

AUSTIN WULLIMAN

NOTES

HILDA PAREDES: KOAN FOR VIOLIN, HORN, AND PIANO

IN BRIEF

BORN: 1957, Tehuacán, Puebla, Mexico

PREMIERE: April 4, 2023, TAKT Trio, Glick Indiana History Center

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

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

DURATION: 18 minutes

Born in Tehuacán, Puebla, Mexico, Hilda Paredes has resided in London since her early twenties. She studied piano and flute as a girl, also performing with and arranging for various local ensembles. The Mexican composer Mario Lavista was her principal instructor at Mexico City's Conservatory. Paredes pursued her higher education in England at the Guildhall School of Music and City University in London, where she earned her master's degree. During her university years, Paredes attended master classes with major English musical figures, including Peter Maxwell Davies and Richard Rodney Bennett. She completed her PhD at Manchester University, working with John Casken.

Though based in London and working primarily as a freelance composer, Paredes has an international profile. She has taught at the University of San Diego and Mills College in California, Mexico City's National University, Barcelona's Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya, and France's Centre Acanthe in Paris. She has been honored with awards in the UK, Mexico, and the USA (including a Guggenheim fellowship). Some of her works draw on Mexico's Mayan heritage, but her music employs traditions and techniques from both sides of the Atlantic.

Koan was co-commissioned by the Koussevitzky Music Foundation and the TAKT Trio. Ms. Paredes's composer's note explains the work's unusual title, as well as connections to György Ligeti and Johannes Brahms, whose Trio for violin, horn, and piano follow it on this program:

Koan was written to celebrate the centenary of György Ligeti, a composer whose music was an inspiration since my student days and whom I was to meet many years later. I welcomed the invitation from TAKT Trio to contribute to his centenary and decided to render a tribute by encoding the letters of his name into a melodic/harmonic cell which opens (and closes) the work, firstly in the horn and later held as a harmony by the elbows on the piano: A, G, E, Bb, which would correspond to LiGETi (*think "Ti" as in do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-ti-do*). The notes of the harmonic spectrum in the horn part also make a reference to Ligeti's own trio, but in *Koan* this is explored in a dialogue with the violin from the beginning of the piece.

Koan also makes reference to the Brahms Horn Trio in the middle section of the piece, where fragments of quotes from this great work disintegrate into the fabric of *Koan*'s musical context, like windows opening to other times.

As the experience in writing this work was full of unexpected surprises, it just seemed fit to give the work such a title which means a paradoxical anecdote or riddle without a solution, used in Zen Buddhism to demonstrate the inadequacy of logical reasoning and provoke enlightenment.

In some schools of the Zen tradition in China, Korea, Vietnam, and Japan, a *kōan* is employed to catalyze a spiritual awakening that some people have called “an enlightenment experience.” It can also allude to a question that cannot be answered.

TAKT Trio played the premiere of *Koan* in April 2023 at the Glick Indiana History Center. This evening’s performance is the Colorado premiere.

IN BRIEF

BORN: May 28, 1923, Târnâveni, Romania

DIED: June 12, 2006, Vienna, Austria

PREMIERE: August 7, 1982, Bergedorf Castle, Hamburg, Germany

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

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

DURATION: 21 minutes

GYÖRGY LIGETI: TRIO FOR VIOLIN, HORN, AND PIANO

If you’re familiar with Ligeti, it might be because of his *Lux Aeterna*, which Stanley Kubrick used for the soundtrack of the iconic 1968 film *2001: A Space Odyssey*. (Kubrick also borrowed snippets of Ligeti’s *Atmosphères* and *Requiem*—though none with the composer’s permission.) Few listeners are familiar with Ligeti’s other music.

Arguably the most distinguished Hungarian composer since Bartók, Ligeti was born in a Hungarian-speaking part of Transylvania to Jewish parents. His father and brother died in Nazi camps, and he barely survived the war himself, working with high explosives near the front line as a Nazi slave laborer. Postwar life in Communist Romania was not much better, but poor health kept Ligeti out of mandatory military service, and he managed to graduate from the Budapest Academy of Music in 1949. He served on its faculty until he fled Hungary for Vienna after the unsuccessful Hungarian uprising in 1956. In the 1960s, he became active with the European *avant-garde* and was closely associated with the Darmstadt-Cologne school. Ligeti became an Austrian citizen in 1967.

The Horn Trio is a relatively late work. It is subtitled “*Hommage à Brahms*,” an allusion to the most famous trio for horn, violin and piano, Brahms’s Op. 40, also on tonight’s program. However, the work might more accurately be subtitled “Homage to Beethoven, using a Brahmsian instrumental model and borrowing heavily from Eastern European folk dances *à la* Bartók.” That sounds like a lot to pack into one work, and this is a big

Program Notes

Continued

piece: four sizeable movements that take more than 20 minutes in performance. In a deferential bow to Brahms, Ligeti specifies certain "natural horn" passages (as opposed to the modern valved horn). Brahms, too, wrote his Horn Trio for natural horn. Beyond that, the separation into four movements is about the extent of any connection to Brahms.

The Beethoven allusions, on the other hand, are a constant throughout the piece. Ligeti's opening violin phrase is strongly reminiscent of the initial *Lebewohl* (Farewell) motive in Beethoven's *Les Adieux* piano sonata: not an exact quotation, but a deliberate misstatement, as if Beethoven has somehow run amok. The distorted motive recurs in each of the three succeeding movements as a unifying factor that helps impose order on the sometimes chaotic complexity of Ligeti's writing.

A second characteristic that will help listeners hearing this work for the first time is its melodic repetition. Patterns are most obvious in the second movement, *Vivacissimo molto ritmico*, which the composer has additionally marked "fresh, sparkling, light, gliding, dancing." An insistent ascending scale pattern in the pianist's left hand (and occasionally in the other two instruments) runs like a motor rhythm almost throughout the movement; anyone familiar with Bartók's *Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm* from *Mikrokósmos* will recognize the Eastern European drive of this surging motive. Other bell-like and pizzicato patterns are superimposed, but the scale is the constant, propelling this extraordinary tour de force on its high-speed journey. A *Lebewohl* statement allows the perpetual motion to cease.

Our growing sense that Ligeti's music is barely in control persists in the third movement march. Here is no straightforward 4/4 movement: this march seems to include a severe limp, lurching forward in a desperate attempt to maintain conventional precision. The jerky imprecision is, of course, intentional; only the flowing trio section provides a release from the tension of the march gone awry. Ligeti closes his trio with another slow movement, called *Lamento*, in which the *Lebewohl* quasi-motif—after a while extended downward from three notes to four or five—figures prominently. Any optimism engendered by the vibrant second movement is erased by the tragedy implicit in this grief-stricken finale. Josef Häusler has written:

The expressive climax of the work appears in a great fortissimo outburst shortly before the end where the piano, with a long descending gesture, burrows its way into the chromatic lament ... Never before has György Ligeti so uninhibitedly conveyed grief, pain, and resignation.

IN BRIEF

BORN: May 7, 1833, Hamburg, Germany

DIED: April 3, 1897, Vienna, Austria

PREMIERE: November 28, 1865, Zürich, Switzerland

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: January 25, 1995, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

DURATION: 29 minutes

JOHANNES BRAHMS: TRIO IN E-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 40, FOR HORN, VIOLIN, AND PIANO

Throughout his life, Brahms had an intense interest in the horn. Solos for the instrument abound in his orchestral music. Its rich, mellow, dark-hued timbre fascinated him among wind instruments, much as viola did in the string family. Because of Brahms's affinity for horn, a chamber work featuring it is not in and of itself singular. What makes the so-called Horn Trio, Op. 40 unique is that Brahms composed it for the Waldhorn, a simple hunting horn without valves. This primitive instrument could only produce pitches in the natural harmonic overtone series. Thus a composer writing for Waldhorn was restricted to a limited number of pitches: in ascending order, E-flat, B-flat, E-flat, G, B-flat, D-flat, E-flat, F, G, etc.

Although the Waldhorn was already becoming obsolete in Brahms's day, he adopted the instrument's limitations in the trio, allowing them to govern much of the music's form, key structure, and atmosphere. For example, all four movements are in E-flat; the slow movement shifts to E-flat minor but remains within the horn's tonal capacity. The pitches within the Waldhorn's purview gave it an unusual capacity for blending in its lower and middle ranges. Brahms capitalized on this advantage. The result, in addition to being a glorious piece of chamber music, is one of the most spiritually and atmospherically unified compositions in all of Brahms.

The first movement is Brahms's only departure from sonata form in his major instrumental compositions. Using an alternating form that is related to a rondo, the *Andante's* structure is A-B-A-B-A. Its themes are broad and song-like, exploring the horn's noble and lyrical side. This tentative, introspective character returns for the third movement *Adagio mesto* (*mesto* means "sad" or "mournful"), which is the most emotionally charged movement in the trio. Brahms composed this work in May 1865, just a few months after his mother's death. Historians have traditionally viewed the slow movement as an expression of his grief. E-flat minor is a tragic key for any instrument or group of instruments. In the context of Brahms's personal circumstances at the time, it takes on an even darker hue.

Both the second and fourth movements are quite different in character. They are scherzi, emphasizing the horn's hunting heritage. The finale is also structured in sonata form, lending weight and closure to the entire work without compromising the excitement and high spirits of the hunt.

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