

MARLBORO MUSIC

MITSUOKO UCHIDA & JONATHAN BISS, ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

PREVIEW NOTES

WEEK FIVE • PERSONS AUDITORIUM

Friday, August 14 at 8 pm

Trio for Oboe, Clarinet, and Bassoon (1921)

Heitor Villa-Lobos

Born March 5, 1887, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil • Died November 17, 1959, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Duration: approx. 12 minutes

This trio dates from Villa-Lobos's most experimental decade, before his years in Paris tempered some of his wilder instincts. Scored for oboe, clarinet, and bassoon, the work trades the lush orchestral palette for which Villa-Lobos later became famous for a leaner, more astringent sound, full of the syncopation and melodic exuberance of Brazilian popular music filtered through a modernist ear. Shifting meters, tart harmonic clashes, and quicksilver changes of mood keep the three winds in constant, agile conversation.

Participants: *Spencer Rubin, oboe; Yejin Ahn, clarinet; Guillaume Santana, bassoon*

Piano Trio in G Minor, Op. 110 (1851)

Robert Schumann

Born June 8, 1810, Zwickau, Germany • Died July 29, 1856, Endenich, Germany

Duration: approx. 28 minutes

Composed in the last full year before the mental crisis that would end his career, this trio inhabits darker, more turbulent territory than Schumann's earlier two. The opening movement's marking "agitated" undersells the tension in its restless main theme, built on an unstable rising interval whose stressed notes land on dissonances; the development works this material into a double fugue. A wistful slow movement drifts like the memory of a waltz before giving way to a rondo-scherzo whose sweeping theme recalls the first movement. The finale bounds through a series of episodes that include a mock-pompous march, Schumann's gift for storytelling and character fully intact even as darker forces gathered around him.

Participants: *Ieva Jokubaviciute, piano; Meesun Hong Coleman, violin; Nagyeom Jang, cello*

Piano Trio in F Minor, Op. 65, B. 130 (1883)

Antonín Dvořák

Born September 8, 1841, Nelahozeves, Bohemia • Died May 1, 1904, Prague, Bohemia

Duration: approx. 38 minutes

Composed in the months following the death of Dvořák's mother and amid pressure from well-meaning friends to abandon his Czech folk idiom for a more cosmopolitan, Brahmsian style, this trio is the darkest and most turbulent of Dvořák's four works in the genre. Unusually for a composer who typically finished chamber works within a matter of weeks, Dvořák spent nearly two months on the piece and revised it further before publication. Dense, symphonic piano writing and sweeping melodic arches strain against the trio's three-instrument frame in the outer movements, while a restless scherzo, built on cross-rhythms between piano and strings, unsettles the listener's sense of meter. Czech national character bursts into full flower in the finale, a furiant—a fast, fiery Bohemian dance in triple time with shifting accents—that drives headlong to the close.

Participants: *Cynthia Raim, piano; Yebin Yoo, violin; Annie Jacobs-Perkins, cello*

Saturday, August 15 at 8 pm

Brandenburg Concerto No. 1 in F Major, BWV 1046 (1721)

Johann Sebastian Bach

Born March 21, 1685, Eisenach, Germany • Died July 28, 1750, Leipzig, Germany

Duration: approx. 22 minutes

Bach assembled his six “Brandenburg” concertos from works likely composed over several preceding years, sending the collection to Christian Ludwig, Margrave of Brandenburg, with a dedication dated March 1721, while he served as Kapellmeister at the court of Anhalt-Köthen. The First Concerto is the grandest and most unusual of the set: the only one in four movements, and the one calling for the largest roster of soloists. An earlier version, lacking the concluding dance movements, had served as the sinfonia to one of Bach's hunting cantatas. In its final form the concerto trades the terse economy of its companions for an almost suite-like breadth, closing with a minuet that alternates with a trio for oboes and bassoon, a second trio for horns, and a stately polonaise for strings.

Participants: *Frank Rosenwein, oboe; Alexander Mayer, oboe; Spencer Rubin, oboe; Duncan Henry, bassoon; Colby Kleven, horn; Alberto Menéndez Escribano, horn; Masha Lakisova, violin; Meesun Hong Coleman, violin; Laurel Gagnon, violin; Brian Isaacs, viola; Laura Navasardian, cello; Tobias Vigneau, double-bass; Juho Pohjonen, harpsichord*

Vier ernste Gesänge, Op. 121 (1896)

Johannes Brahms

Born May 7, 1833, Hamburg, Germany • Died April 3, 1897, Vienna, Austria

Duration: approx. 16 minutes

Brahms composed these four songs in Vienna in the spring of 1896, completing them by his sixty-third birthday that May, while withholding from most friends the true occasion for their composition: the declining health of Clara Schumann, who had suffered a stroke that March and would die two months later. Setting texts drawn from Ecclesiastes, Ecclesiasticus, and First Corinthians, the cycle moves from the bleak observation that man and beast share a common mortal end, through a meditation on the tears of the oppressed, to a closing hymn on the vanity of eloquence, wisdom, and even faith without love. Brahms cautioned Clara's daughter not to misread the songs' occasion, insisting they be taken "completely in earnest" rather than as an elegy, though he himself would not live to see another birthday, dying less than a year after their premiere.

Participants: *Evan Luca Gray, bass-baritone; Lydia Brown, piano*

String Quartet in G Major, D. 887 (1826)

Franz Schubert

Born January 31, 1797, Vienna, Austria • Died November 19, 1828, Vienna, Austria

Duration: approx. 50 minutes

Schubert composed his last and longest string quartet in a mere ten days in June 1826, around the time Beethoven was completing his own late essays in the genre. Nearly symphonic in scope, the quartet is built on the same restless opposition of light and shadow that runs through much of Schubert's late music: a G Major chord in the opening bars slides almost immediately into G Minor, and the two keys contend with one another to the work's final pages. Shivering tremolos and sudden dynamic swings alternate with long-breathed lyrical melody, while a nimble scherzo and a swaying trio offer the quartet's only real respite. Left unperformed in Schubert's lifetime, the work was not published until 1851, more than two decades after his death.

Participants: *Gabrielle Després, violin; Stephanie Zyzak, violin; Brian Isaacs, viola; Macintyre Taback, cello*

Sunday, August 16 at 2:30 pm

Mládí (1924)

Leoš Janáček

Born July 3, 1854, Hukvaldy, Moravia • Died August 12, 1928, Moravská Ostrava, Czechoslovakia

Duration: approx. 20 minutes

Janáček composed this wind sextet after hearing a Parisian wind ensemble perform contemporary French repertoire at a festival in Salzburg the previous year. Scored for an expanded quintet with the addition of bass clarinet, the four-movement suite is, in the composer's own words, “a kind of memory of youth,” drawing on his days as a boy chorister at the Augustinian monastery in Brno. An oboe tune in the first movement sets the words “youth, golden youth” to Janáček's characteristic speech-melody, while a somber second movement, introduced by the bassoon, edges toward a funeral march before four variations turn wistful and introspective. The third movement quotes Janáček's own “March of the Blue-Boys,” written for the blue uniforms worn by the monastery's students, and the finale recalls the opening material in a buoyant, high-spirited close.

Participants: *Joshua Smith, flute/piccolo; Alexander Mayer, oboe; Jonathan Leibovitz, clarinet; Colby Kleven, horn; Guilhaume Santana, bassoon; Yejin Ahn, bass clarinet*

Trois poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé (1913)

Maurice Ravel

Born March 7, 1875, Ciboure, France • Died December 28, 1937, Paris, France

Duration: approx. 11 minutes

Composed in 1913 for voice with an ensemble of two flutes, two clarinets, string quartet, and piano, these three settings mark Ravel's most direct engagement with the harmonic experimentation then reshaping European music. Having encountered Stravinsky's own Mallarmé-inspired songs—themselves modeled on Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire*—Ravel undertook his own “transposition” of the poet's dense, allusive verse into sound, composing the three songs in different cities tied to his own life: Paris, Saint-Jean-de-Luz, and Clarens, Switzerland, where he reunited with Stravinsky. Ravel considered Mallarmé the only true poet of the French language, one who had bent it toward music against its nature, and his settings answer that verse with a comparable refinement: sparse, glinting textures and a harmonic language poised between tonal warmth and something more astringent.

Participants: *Veronica Siebert, mezzo-soprano; Joshua Smith, flute; Hannah Tassler, flute/piccolo; Yejin Ahn, clarinet; Jonathan Leibovitz, clarinet/bass clarinet; Tiffany Chang, violin; Meesun Hong Coleman, violin; Misha Amory, viola; Laura Navasardian, cello; Lydia Brown, piano*

String Quartet No. 2 in C Major, Op. 36 (1945)

Benjamin Britten

Born November 22, 1913, Lowestoft, England • Died December 4, 1976, Aldeburgh, England

Duration: approx. 27 minutes

Britten composed his Second String Quartet in the weeks following the triumphant premiere of his opera *Peter Grimes*, completing it in October 1945 for a concert marking the two-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of the death of Henry Purcell, whom Britten revered above all English composers. The quartet's finale is an extended tribute to that legacy: a Chacony—Purcell's own spelling for the chaconne—built from 21 variations on a single ground bass, grouped into four sections by solo cadenzas for cello, viola, and violin, each exploring what Britten called the theme's harmonic, rhythmic, melodic, and formal dimensions. The two preceding movements are more compact: a spacious opening movement whose three themes all grow from the same wide leap of a tenth, and a sardonic scherzo tinged with the astringent wit of Shostakovich, a composer Britten increasingly admired.

Participants: *Gabrielle Després, violin; Laurel Gagnon, violin; Emad Zolfaghari, viola; Marie Bitlloch, cello*

Fantasia for Piano, Chorus and Orchestra, Op. 80 (1808)

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born December 16, 1770, Bonn, Germany • Died March 26, 1827, Vienna, Austria

Duration: approx. 20 minutes

Beethoven wrote the Choral Fantasy in a matter of days in December 1808 as a grand closing number for the marathon benefit concert he mounted for himself at Vienna's Theater an der Wien on December 22 of that year—a nearly four-hour program that also introduced the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, the Fourth Piano Concerto, and excerpts from the Mass in C, all performed in an unheated hall by musicians who had barely rehearsed. Conceived as a brilliant finale that would unite every force heard that evening—solo piano, chorus, and orchestra—the Fantasy opens with an extended piano solo that Beethoven largely improvised at the premiere, before the orchestra enters by degrees and the chorus joins for a set of variations on a hymn-like theme, set to verses praising the unifying power of art. The work's choral apotheosis anticipates, in embryonic form, the finale Beethoven would write for his Ninth Symphony some 16 years later.

Participants: *Mitsuko Uchida, piano; Marlboro Festival Orchestra and Chorus*

—ALL PROGRAMS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE—