

Upcoming Events of the Seventy-Sixth Season of The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin Concerts

Unless otherwise noted, all programs take place in the West Building, West Garden Court.

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Narek Hakhnazaryan, cello
Noreen Cassidy-Polera, piano
Music by Albéniz, Brahms, Schumann, and others
February 25, 3:30

—
ETHEL
Blue Dress for String Quartet
March 4, 3:30

—
Janoska Ensemble
Classical music with jazz, gypsy, tango, Latin, and a dash of pop
March 11, 3:30

—
The Canales Project
Hear Her Song
A celebration of the choices of extraordinary women
March 18, 3:30

—
Benedetto Lupo, piano
Featuring solo piano works by Debussy
Celebrating *Cézanne Portraits*
March 25, 3:30

—
Richard Stoltzman, clarinet
Mika Stoltzman, marimba
Duo Cantando
Music by Bill Douglas, Chick Corea, Toru Takemitsu, and John Zorn
April 1, 3:30

Heinavanker Ensemble
Featuring ancient Estonian songs and folk hymns
Celebrating *Michel Sittow: Estonian Painter at the Courts of Renaissance Europe*

April 8, 3:30

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Admission to the National Gallery of Art and all of its programs is free of charge, except as noted.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that all portable electronic devices are turned off.

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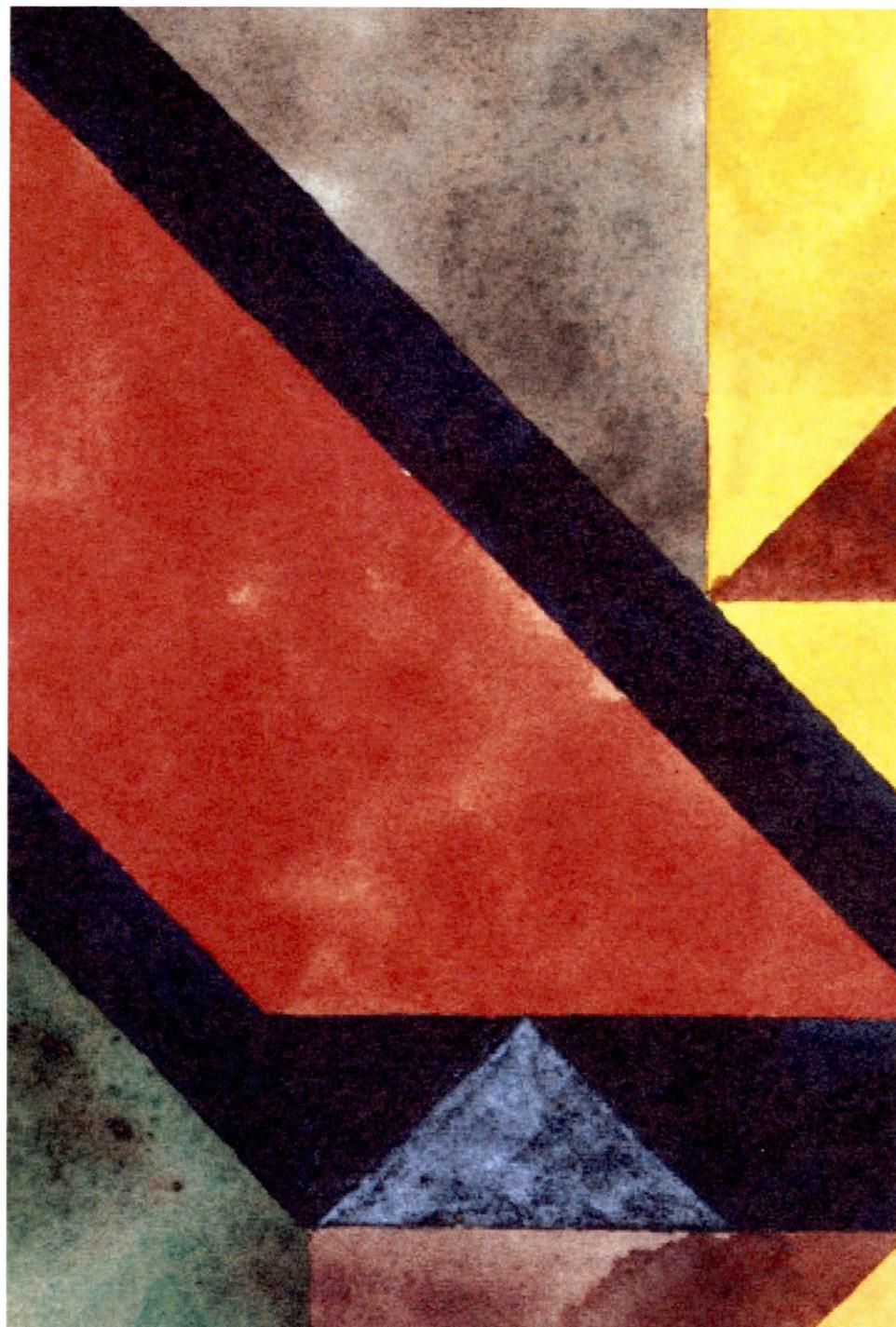
Cover Keith Anden Achepohl, *Capriccio VII* (detail), 1995, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of the Artist

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76TH SEASON OF CONCERTS

FEBRUARY 18, 2018 / NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART





Trio con Brio Copenhagen, Photo by John Green

Program

Trio con Brio Copenhagen

Soo-Jin Hong, violin

Soo-Kyung Hong, cello

Jens Elvekjær, piano

FEBRUARY 18, 2018 / 3:30

WEST BUILDING, WEST GARDEN COURT

To Travel Is to Live

Edvard Grieg (1843–1907)

Three Songs by Edvard Grieg,

from the *Hjertets Melodier*

(Melodies of the Heart), op. 5

“To brune øjne” (Two Brown Eyes)

“Du fatter ej bølgerne gang”

(The Poet’s Heart)

“Jeg elsker dig!” (I love you!)

Transcribed by Trio con Brio

Copenhagen

Niels W. Gade (1817–1890)

Piano Trio in F Major, op. 42

Allegro animato

Allegro molto

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)

Piano Trio no. 2 in C Minor, op. 66

Allegro energico e con fuoco

Andante espressivo

Scherzo: Molto allegro;

quasi presto

Finale: Allegro appassionato

Intermission

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

Piano Trio in A Minor, op. 50

I. Pezzo elegiaco: Moderato assai;

Allegro giusto

II. Tema con variazioni: Andante

con moto

Variation I

Variation II: Più mosso

Variation III: Allegro moderato

Variation IV: L’istesso tempo

(Allegro moderato)

Variation V: L’istesso tempo

Variation VI: Tempo di valse

Variation VII: Allegro

moderato

Variation VIII: Fuga

(Allegro moderato)

Variation IX: Andante flebile,

ma non tanto

Variation X: Tempo di mazurka

Variation XI: Moderato

Variazioni finale e coda: Allegro

risoluto e con fuoco

The Ensemble

Founded in Vienna in 1999 with the concept of pairs coming together, the two Korean sisters, Soo-Jin and Soo-Kyung Hong, and Jens Elvekjær (married to Soo-Kyung) have since been exploring the piano trio repertoire with freshness and curiosity, as well as with respect and reflection. In particular, they have been gaining a reputation for their creative approach to the core repertoire. “Works by Beethoven, Schubert, and Brahms are transformed in their hands into the alive-and-kicking music of today,” says Esben Tange, of Danish radio’s DR P2.

Trio con Brio Copenhagen has an intensive worldwide touring schedule with appearances this season in Washington DC, Los Angeles, Dublin (Ireland), Hannover and Mannheim (Germany), the Evian Festival (France), Gothenburg (Sweden), Trondheim (Norway), and Copenhagen (Denmark). In recent years, the trio has appeared in major concert halls in Europe, the United States, and Asia, including the Tivoli Concert Hall, the Concertgebouw, Carnegie Hall, Wigmore Hall, the Konzerthaus Berlin, the Seoul Arts Center, Tokyo Bunka Kaikan, and Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza.

Since its inception, the ensemble has won most of the international competitions for piano trio, namely the ARD (Munich), Vittorio Gui (Florence), and Norway’s Trondheim Competition. In January 2015, the trio was the first ensemble to receive the P2 Artists Prize, one of Denmark’s most prestigious music honors. Other major awards received include the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson International Trio Award (USA) and the Allianz Prize from Germany’s Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

Trio con Brio Copenhagen continues to play a central role in Scandinavia’s vibrant contemporary music scene. Several of Denmark’s most prominent composers, such as Per Nørgård and Bent Sørensen, as well as Swedish composer Sven-David Sandström, have composed and dedicated works to the trio. In 2012, Trio con Brio Copenhagen was honored to be chosen by Per Nørgård as the dedicatee of a work that premiered in Stockholm for his eightieth birthday. In January 2016, the trio gave the world premiere of Sørensen’s triple concerto, *L’Isola della Città* (The Island in the City), with the Danish National Orchestra.

The trio’s debut CD was unanimously praised by critics: “One of the greatest performances of chamber music I’ve ever encountered...” (*American Record Guide*), and “The performances can compete with the best available... airtight ensemble... a superb, greatly gifted chamber group” (*Gramophone Magazine*). The trio’s Mendelssohn CD was chosen by Classic FM, UK, as Chamber Disc of 2011, and its latest recording, *Phantasmagoria*, featuring Danish contemporary music, has received rave reviews as well.

In addition to frequently performing Beethoven’s Concerto for Violin, Cello, and Piano in C Major, op. 56, with orchestras, the trio premiered Sandström’s *Six Pieces for Piano Trio and Orchestra* with the Danish National Symphony Orchestra in Copenhagen’s Koncerthuset in 2011. The next year, the trio was invited to perform this work with the Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra for the composer’s seventieth birthday concert.

As educators, the trio members teach at the Royal Academy in Copenhagen and give master classes on their international tours, including at Yale University, Rice University, and the Royal Irish Academy of Music. The trio founded the Copenhagen Chamber Music Festival and serve as its artistic directors.

The trio’s sound benefits from their superb instruments: Soo-Jin Hong plays a violin built by Andrea Guarneri from the seventeenth century, and Soo-Kyung Hong plays a Grancino cello. Of note, Jens Elvekjær is Denmark’s first Steinway Artist. The ensemble was coached by the Alban Berg Quartet, and by Frans Helmerson, Mihaela Martin, and Harald Schoneweg at the Cologne University of Music. Excellent musical guidance also came from Ferenc Rados in Budapest.

Program Notes

In 1830, Hans Christian Andersen wrote a series of eight love poems titled *Hjertets Melodier* (Melodies of the Heart) for Riborg Voigt, the daughter of a Danish merchant. Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg subsequently chose four of these poems and composed his own touching *Hjertets Melodier* in 1864, crediting his future wife, Miss Nina Hagerup, as his muse. In today's concert, Trio con Brio Copenhagen presents its transcription of three of these simple, expressive songs.

Born in Copenhagen, Niels W. Gade began his music career as a concert violinist with the Royal Danish Orchestra. Through close association with Felix Mendelssohn, he was invited to teach at the famous Leipzig Conservatory and later was appointed as its director. Gade was also conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, and in 1848, returned to Copenhagen to become director of the Copenhagen Musical Society. Widely regarded as Denmark's most important composer from the mid-Romantic period, he taught and influenced several Scandinavian composers, including Edvard Grieg, Carl Nielsen, and Otto Malling.

Gade's Piano Trio in F Major, op. 42, was published in 1864, and, according to the *Handbook for Piano Trio Players* by Wilhelm Altmann, it is Gade's most substantial work for this combination. The two movements featured on today's program are described by Altmann as "a fresh-sounding Allegro animato" followed by an "archetypical scherzo" with the Allegro molto vivace having "pleasing and elegant middle sections."

Composed in 1845, Mendelssohn's Piano Trio no. 2 in C Minor, op. 66, was the last of his chamber works published during his lifetime. In the middle of the 1844–1845 concert season, he was granted a brief sabbatical from his duties as music director, administrator, and conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, giving him an opportunity to concentrate on his writing. In addition to some substantial work on his oratorio *Elijah*, he completed the String Quintet in B-flat Major and the Piano Trio in C Minor. Responding to urgent pleas from the management of the Gewandhaus, he returned to his demanding position the following fall. The resumption of a frantic pace of life was deemed to be a factor in his untimely death in 1847.

One of Mendelssohn's strongest sonata movements, the opening movement of today's trio features a first theme with dramatic rising and falling figures, followed by a sweeping second theme. The second movement, marked Andante espressivo, is an extended three-part song without words—one of Mendelssohn's favorite genres. The swift, light, and nimble third movement is a prime example of his characteristic scherzo writing, as the elfin perpetual motion evokes visions of woodland creatures. The impassioned Finale presents a principal subject with a great leap in the cello, balanced by a second theme based on a chorale that has been traced to the *Genevan Psalter* of 1551.

In October 1880, Tchaikovsky's patroness, Nadezhda von Meck (1831–1894), asked him to compose a piece for the trio ensemble that regularly gave concerts in her home. Not having written much chamber music, the composer demurred, insisting that he did not find the piano to be compatible in tone with string instruments, and that he generally favored orchestral writing. When Nikolai Rubinstein (1835–1881), one of Russia's most prominent pianists, died the following spring, Tchaikovsky composed the piano trio in memory of his dear friend and mentor. The work was completed in February 1882, and three colleagues from the Moscow Conservatory gave a private performance of it on March 23, 1882, the first anniversary of Rubinstein's death. After a number of revisions and adjustments, the composition received its first public performance in October of that year, and it subsequently became very popular during Tchaikovsky's lifetime and was performed throughout Europe and the United States.

A large-scale work set in two sections, the piano trio is marked by a tragic tone. The mournful first movement (Pezzo elegiaco) is an elegy to Rubenstein and a moving testimony to the loss Tchaikovsky felt. In expanded sonata-allegro form, it is warm and passionate, presenting a number of lyrical melodies. The second movement is a theme and set of variations followed by a finale and coda. The simple folklike theme and the eleven variations are said to have been inspired by a day Tchaikovsky and Rubinstein spent picnicking in the country, when a group of peasants appeared and provided music for the afternoon in exchange for food and wine. The grand finale begins as if it were a twelfth variation, but the mood abruptly changes as the opening theme from the first movement returns. Of greater length and difficulty than most piano trios, this work stands out in the chamber music repertoire as a touchstone of grandeur and brilliance.

Program notes for the Mendelssohn and Tchaikovsky trios by Danielle DeSwert Hahn, from the National Gallery of Art's 2,957th concert, June 30, 2013.