



**2008-2009 Season
Program III**

**John Chisholm, violin
Florin Parvulescu, violin
Christina King, viola
Barbara Andres, cello
Marc Shapiro, piano**

**Grace Presbyterian Church
February 22, 2009 3pm**



Franz Joseph Haydn
(1732 – 1809)

String Quartet in D major, Op.76, No.5
(1799)

- I Allegretto – Allegro
- II Largo cantabile e mesto
- III Menuetto: Allegro
- IV Finale: Presto

John Chisholm, violin *Florin Parvulescu, violin*
Christina King, viola *Barbara Andres, cello*

Robert Schumann
(1810 – 1856)

Fantasiestücke (Fantasy Pieces)
for Cello and Piano, Op.73 (1849)

- I Zart und mit Ausdruck (Tender and with expression)
- II Lebhaft, leicht (Lively, light)
- I II Rasch und mit Feuer (Rapid and with fire)

Barbara Andres, cello *Marc Shapiro, piano*

Intermission

Sergei Prokofiev
(1891 – 1953)

String Quartet No. 2 in F major
on Kabardian Themes, Op.92 (1942)

- I Allegro sostenuto
- II Adagio
- III Allegro – Andante molto

Florin Parvulescu, violin *John Chisholm, violin*
Christina King, viola *Barbara Andres, cello*



“I can’t listen to music too often. It affects your nerves, makes you want to say stupid nice things, and stroke the heads of people who could create such beauty while living in this vile hell.”

Lenin to Maxim Gorky ⁽¹⁾

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732 – 1809)
String Quartet in D major, Op.76, No.5 (1799)

Props fo’ Pops

Franz Joseph Haydn is, in my opinion, arguably the most underappreciated of the great Classical composers. His life story has none of the compelling drama of either of his colleagues; Mozart, the astonishing child prodigy, whose music matures, while he doesn’t, and of course, Beethoven, the heaven-storming composer, punished by the gods with deafness. I doubt that you’ll ever see a major motion picture made about his life. He did achieve well-earned international success at the end of his life, as well as the affection of his fellow musicians with the nickname “Papa”. However, today he is known primarily by a handful of works from his sets of “Paris” and “London” Symphonies; a very small sampling considering that he composed over 104 symphonies. If you want to embark on a fascinating musical journey, I suggest listening to all of the symphonies; which thanks to recordings, are available to the curious. In them, you will discover ceaseless experimentation; experimentation with form, resources at hand, tone color- once you get used to his language, you will be astonished by his orchestrations. Haydn, writing for his small orchestra, brings to mind Duke Ellington or Count Basie writing specifically for the musicians they had on hand, with their particular virtuosity. On top of this, with Papa, you will find one of most consistently witty of all composers. His timing is impeccable and there are always surprises in his music, and he conjures up a wide range of musical moods. To me he represents one of the great minds of the Enlightenment, though expressed through music. And let us not forget that this was the guy who is considered the “father” of the symphony and string quartet.

Regarding Haydn’s experimentation, the String Quartet in D, Op.76, and No.5 is a case in point. It is from a set of six quartets known collectively as the Erdödy Quartets. This quartet is somewhat unusual in that it does not open with the usual first movement sonata-allegro form, as do the two works which surround the fifth quartet. Even the two surrounding works approach the sonata allegro somewhat differently. The fourth quartet opens in a somewhat symphonic fashion, with a slow introduction followed by and allegro, while the sixth quartet immediately spins out a motif out of which the movement will be constructed. The fifth quartet opens with a tuneful theme and set of variations on that theme. The lyrical quality of the quartet continues in the second movement largo which is marked “cantabile” – in a singing style. It is a lovely melancholy song.



The tunefulness continues in the third movement with a flowing minuet. Haydn's sense of humor is quite evident in the finale, which he starts off with a closing cadence which he then turns into a lively folk dance. One can only speculate why Haydn lavished all of this lyricism into one quartet. In his day, performances of these works would easily consist of three quartets played at a sitting. Perhaps this quartet, as a whole, served as a contrast in pace; between the fourth and sixth quartets. Who knows?

Robert Schumann (1810 – 1856)
Fantasiestücke (Fantasy Pieces) for Cello and Piano, Op.73 (1849)

While today regarded as one of the premiere Early Romantic Composers, alongside his idol Mendelssohn, and Chopin, during his lifetime Schumann was regarded as an enthusiastic writer on matters musical, a somewhat eccentric composer, and “Mr. Clara Schumann”, very much playing “second fiddle”, as it were, to his wife, the pianist superstar Clara Schumann, who for her part used her stardom to promote Robert's music.

Quite honestly, there's not a lot to write about regarding these lovely pieces; except to say that they were originally composed for clarinet and piano, in a flash of inspiration, between Feb. 11 & 12, 1849. They were published in a version for violin and piano, and cello and piano, as well as the original clarinet version. While Clara herself gave performances of these pieces on various occasions, with the violinists Joseph Joachim and Ferdinand David, the mood of these pieces seems particularly suited to the deep and lush voice of the cello. The pieces progress from the pensive song-like first movement picking up momentum and mood in the second, ending with the energetic and passionate third movement.

Sergei Prokofiev (1891 – 1953)
String Quartet No. 2 in F major on Kabardian Themes, Op.92 (1942)

Chamber music played a relatively small role in Prokofiev's musical output. His fame rests on his orchestral music - the symphonies, concerti, ballets, film scores and piano music. However, his few chamber music works, the two string quartets, the Overture on Hebrew Themes and the two sonatas for violin and piano remain popular, and are often performed.

The String Quartet No. 2 was composed in about five weeks in the autumn of 1942 in the little town of Nalchik, in the Kabardino-Balkaria Autonomous Republic, located in the foothills of the northern Caucasus mountains between the Black and Caspian Seas (Tourism has been off in recent years, as a result rates are very reasonable, so if you're looking for that secluded get-away spot far from clichéd travel destinations, this is the place for you! And, if the Germans act up again, why, you'll be safe.) During



the summer of 1942, following the demise of the non-aggression pact between Hitler and Stalin, as the German Army was overrunning Russia, the Soviet government evacuated a group of its then favored musicians, actors, artists and professors from Moscow to the safety of this little known region. (I don't even wish to think about whom the American government of today might choose, if presented with this same predicament.) It was under these circumstances that Prokofiev came to know of the folk music of this area. His fascination with the music led him to write this Quartet, the aim of which was to achieve, "a combination of virtually untouched folk material and the most classical of classical forms, the string quartet."

Each of the three movements of the work contains actual folk songs and dances. Prokofiev took care not to prettify the music. He strove to keep the often harsh harmonies and "barbaric" rhythms of the originals, as had Stravinsky, Bartok and Szymanowski in their use of folk materials of Russia, Hungary, and Poland. In his faithfulness to his sources, Prokofiev came under adverse criticism from the official critics who also praised him for his use of folk music. Despite the carping of the critics, the work was an immediate success. The work was premiered by the renowned Beethoven Quartet in Moscow on September 5, 1942 but the start of the performance had to be delayed due to a German air raid.

The first movement (*Allegro sostenuto*) is based on the dance, *Udzh Starikov*, heard at the beginning and on the song *Sosruko*, in which three players create an accordion-like accompaniment to the song, sung by the violin.

The second movement (*Adagio*) is based on a Kabardian love song, *Synilyaklik Zhir*, given to the cello to sing in a high voice. The middle section utilizes a folk dance, *Islamei*, which seeks to imitate the sound of the *kemange*, a variety of spike fiddle originating in Persia and in use in various forms throughout the Middle East. It is a long necked fiddle with typically 3 strings. It is held vertically, with the spike resting on the player's knee and bowed. The movement ends with a brief return of the opening song.

The third movement (*Allegro*) is based on a mountain dance known as *Getegezhev Ogurbi* alternating with two lyrical themes and a reminiscence of the first movement. A Recommendation: If you're looking for a great book on Twentieth Century music, I heartily recommend for its insights and wit *The Rest is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* by Alex Ross.

¹ Alex Ross, *The Rest is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century*. Picador- Farrar, Straus and Giroux, NY. 2007. This quote is taken from the book *The Life and Death of Lenin* by Robert Payne (Simon and Schuster) 1964

Program Notes by Joseph Way



The Musicians

John Chisholm, violin, has been a member of the San Francisco Symphony for the last four years. After receiving a BA and Performance Certificate from the Eastman School of Music, he played with the Rochester Philharmonic as a first violinist. He has also served as Associate Concertmaster of the Louisville Symphony.

Christina King, viola, joined the San Francisco Symphony's viola section in the Fall of 1996. She has been a member of the Tucson Symphony Orchestra, was principal violist in the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, (training orchestra of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra), and has also played with Lyric Opera of Chicago and various orchestras in Mexico City. She received a Master's in Music from Northwestern University, and an A.B. in English from Barnard College/Columbia University.

Florin Parvulescu, violin, who joined the San Francisco Symphony in 1998, is a native of Romania and received degrees from the Peabody Conservatory of Music and the Julliard Preparatory Division. He has been a member of the Saint Louis Symphony and Baltimore Symphony, won the 1993 Marbury Competition at Peabody and was a prizewinner in the 1994 Yale Gordon Concerto Competition. Mr. Parvulescu has appeared in festivals such as Aspen, Victoria International Festival, Ecole Americaines des arts in Fontainebleau, France and as soloist and chamber musician in New York, Baltimore, St. Louis, San Francisco, and Heidelberg, Germany. Recently, Mr. Parvulescu attended the American Academy of Conducting at the Aspen Music Festival.

Barbara Andres, cello, is a graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Music where she studied with Lynn Harrell and Stephen Geber. She has been a member of the San Francisco Symphony since 1977. She was cello performance coach for the San Francisco Youth Orchestra for four years and since 1999 has performed the same role as mentor and coach for young performers at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. She is active as a recitalist and chamber musician throughout the Bay Area, and has appeared as Principal Cellist of the Sierra Chamber Society for the last thirteen seasons.

Marc Shapiro, piano, is accompanist of the San Francisco Symphony Chorus. He has been a featured soloist in Les Noces, Saint-Saens' Carnival of the Animals, and James P. Johnson's Yamekraw with the San Francisco Symphony, as well as annual concerts with the San Francisco Symphony Chorus. Mr. Shapiro plays principal keyboard with the California Symphony and performs with other ensembles such as Composer's Inc., San Francisco Choral Artists, San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, and on Chamber Music Sundae, San Francisco Symphony Chamber Music Series and The Mohonk Festival of the Arts in New York.



Haydn-Prokofiev Anecdote Mashup

Like a Stepping Razor

In 1789, the London publisher John Bland traveled to Vienna in search of new works for publication. Dropping in on Haydn, he found the composer attempting to shave. "I would give my best quartet for a good razor!" he exclaimed. Bland promptly ran back to his lodgings and returned with his own razors of fine English steel. Haydn kept his promise and handed over his latest string quartet (op. 55 No. 2), which is still commonly known as the Rasirmesser Quartett (razor quartet).

Choir Punk

Haydn as a child had an extraordinarily beautiful voice. When he was eight years old, he left his home village of Rohrau, where his father was a wheelwright, to become a chorister at St. Stephens Cathedral in Vienna.

Once the choir was ordered to sing before the Empress Maria Theresa at her newly erected castle of Schonbrunn. The scaffolding had not yet been removed, and the boys had a great time climbing on it. The Empress appeared at the window and angrily commanded them to get down, warning them that any who climbed there again would get a good thrashing.

The next day Haydn came back alone and climbed to the top. The Empress gave orders to have this "fair-haired blockhead" duly punished. Years later, when the now-famous Haydn reminded her of the incident, she remarked that the thrashing had produced good fruit!

Haydn was dismissed from the choir school when he was 17 years old and his voice was changing, ostensibly for cutting off the pigtail of a fellow chorister.

Haydn's marriage to Anna Apollonia

In 1759 Haydn was engaged as music director to the Bohemian Count Ferdinand Maximilian von Morzin, an appointment which gave him financial and social solidity. The following year Haydn married Maria Anna Aloysia Apollonia, three years his senior. Unfortunately the marriage was not a happy one. Haydn said of her: "She doesn't care a straw whether her husband is an artist or a cobbler." It is reported that, out of pure mischief, she liked to use the master's manuscript scores as linings for her pastry or for curl papers. One can understand why Haydn set as a canon the following poem by Lessing:

If in the whole wide world
But one mean wife there is,



How sad that each of us
Should think this one is his!

Haydn's not-so-subtle hint: The Farewell Symphony

Prince Nicolaus became so enamoured with his new palace, planned originally as a summer retreat, that he began to spend more and more time there, away from his Eisenstadt residence. He always took his musicians with him on these sojourns. In winter the unpleasantly damp climate caused Haydn and his orchestra much discomfort.

In the autumn of 1772 the prince kept his musicians at Eszterháza away from their wives and families back in Eisenstadt much longer than was comfortable for them. Haydn, in order to help them return home, wrote an unusual symphony for them to play for the prince. According to Griesinger, Haydn's early biographer, the work was executed as soon as an occasion presented itself, and each player was instructed to put out his candle when his part was ended, seize his music and leave with his instrument tucked under his arm. The prince instantly understood the meaning of this pantomime and the next day he gave the order to leave Esterháza.

Genuine Prokofiev

One of the Brussels Philharmonic's female subscribers made a habit of sketching each visiting artist during the performance and requesting that the resulting work be autographed. When Prokofiev visited, he utterly refused to cooperate, calling his portrait a poor rendering. "It looks more like Furtwangler," he remarked. The usher, acting on the woman's behalf, pleaded with the composer. "Please, Mr. Prokofiev," he begged. "She is such a good subscriber. Please do this little thing for the Brussels Philharmonic!"

Prokofiev, examining the portrait once again, finally took up his pen with a heavy sigh and signed with a flourish - whereupon the usher took a closer look at Prokofiev's "autograph." It read simply: "Furtwangler."

Barbaric Chord

The Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev was evicted from his lodgings on several occasions on account of the noise which accompanied his endeavors. Eventually he stopped composing at the piano, using it only to test certain harmonic combinations. This practice proved adequate until his work was interrupted one day by the arrival of a policeman: "You have just played two hundred and eighteen times in succession," he announced, "the same wildly barbaric chord. Don't deny it. I was in the flat below, I counted them. I summon you to vacate these premises..."



Fair Game

In his young days, Prokofiev rather enjoyed shocking the academicians. He arranged one of his piano pieces for a bassoon quartet. When the four bassoonists filed onto the stage, armed with their forbidding looking instruments and proceeded to bark out Prokofiev's incisive rhythms, a member of the audience rose and remarked: "let's leave before they start shooting." (Nicolas Slonimsky)

Criticrat

The planned premiere of the Scythian Suite was cancelled at the last minute due to the difficulty of finding musicians to play the piece; it called for an enlarged orchestra, and as many performers had been mobilized due to World War I, an adequate number of players could not be found. Nevertheless, the Moscow music critic Leonid Sabaneyev gave the music a scathing review. This prompted a response from Prokofiev stating that the supposed performance must have been a product of Sabaneyev's imagination, as the only copy of the score was in the composer's hands and thus he had not even been able to see it.

Odious Joe

Prokofiev and other Soviet composers came under attack in the 1930s and 40s for elements of Western-style "formalism" in their music. "Formalism" meant music that was atonal, abstract or difficult for audiences to understand at first hearing. In a grovelling "Statement to the Soviet" from 1948, Prokofiev was forced to apologize and promise to do better in the future: "The existence of formalism in several of my compositions," he wrote, "is probably explained by a certain complacency and by insufficiently clear recognition that it is totally unwanted by our people. However, after the resolution which has shaken to the depths our whole society of composers it became apparent exactly what specific music is needed by our people, and the ways of curing the formalistic ailments have become clear."

Among the works Prokofiev wrote around this time to please the Soviet authorities was an obsequious choral ode from 1939 in praise of Joseph Stalin titled "Zdravitza" which is seldom if ever performed today (and then only with the text altered). Some wags - remembering Beethoven's choral "Ode to Joy" - have dubbed "Zdravitza" Prokofiev's "Ode to Joe."

Pay the Man

"Prokofiev was someone interesting and dangerous! He was capable to do you in: brutal, healthy, someone with no principles, who wrote on commission." (Sviatoslav Richter)



Sierra Chamber Society 2008-2009 Season
All concerts at 3PM

Sunday, April 26, 2009
 Francaix - Divertimento
 for Flute and Piano
 Dvorak - Slavonic Dances
 Beethoven - String Quartet,
 Op. 18 No. 2

Sunday, June 7, 2009
 Haydn - Divertimenti
 Hovhanness - String Quartet
 "Jupiter"
 Schumann - Piano Quintet,
 Op. 44 in E flat

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Individual tickets for any concert can be purchased in advance by calling 925 930 8880. We accept VISA and M/C in addition to checks. Tickets can also be purchased at the door of each concert. Remember, we have a flex plan. Any ticket can be used for any concert and if you must miss a concert, consider bringing someone new at a future concert.

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