

# SANIBEL MUSIC FESTIVAL PROGRAM NOTES

## **Manhattan Chamber Players**

**Mark Dover, clarinet ~ Katie Hyun, violin ~  
Michael Katz, cello Luke Fleming, viola ~  
Francesca dePasquale, violin ~ Adam Golka, piano**

Tuesday, March 3, 2020

~ PROGRAM ~

**Trio for Piano, Violin, and Cello  
in G Major “Gypsy Rondo,” Hob. XV:25**

**Joseph HAYDN  
(1732-1809)**

*Andante*

*Poco Adagio*

*Finale. Rondo all’Ongarese: Presto*

**Quintet for Clarinet, Two Violins, Viola and Cello in A major, K. 581**

**Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART  
(1756-1791)**

*Allegro*

*Larghetto*

*Menuetto*

*Allegretto con Variazioni*

~ INTERMISSION ~

**Quintet for Piano, Two Violins, Viola,  
and Cello in F minor, Op. 34**

**Johannes BRAHMS  
(1833-1897)**

*Allegro non troppo*

*Andante, un poco adagio*

*Scherzo: Allegro*

*Finale: Poco sostenuto — Allegro non troppo*

## About Manhattan Chamber Players

The Manhattan Chamber Players is a collective of New York-based musicians who share the common aim of performing the greatest works in the chamber repertory at the highest level. Formed in 2015 by Artistic Director Luke Fleming, MCP comprises an impressive roster of musicians who all come from the tradition of great music making at the Marlboro Music Festival, Steans Institute at Ravinia, Music@Menlo, Yellow Barn Chamber Music Festival, and Perlman Music Program, and are former students of the Curtis Institute, Juilliard School, Colburn School, New England Conservatory, and Yale School of Music. MCP was recently praised in *Strings Magazine* for “a fascinating program concept.... It felt refreshingly like an auditory version of a vertical wine tasting.” The article went on to applaud MCP for “an intensely wrought and burnished performance.... Overall, I wished I could put them on repeat.”

At the core of MCP’s inspiration is its members’ joy in playing this richly varied repertory with longtime friends and colleagues with whom they have since they were students. Building upon that foundation, new works commissioned keep the ensemble firmly grounded in the music of both the past and present. Its roster allows for the programming of virtually all the core string, wind, and piano chamber music repertory, from piano duos to clarinet quintets to string octets. While all its members have independent careers as soloists and chamber musicians, they strive for every opportunity to share in this special collaboration, creating “a mellifluous blend of vigorous intensity and dramatic import, performed with enthusiasm, technical facility, and impressive balance, relishing distinctions ... a winning performance.” (*Classical Source*)

Members of MCP are current and former members of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall’s Ensemble Connect, the Amphion, Attacca, Dover, Escher, Vega, and Ying Quartets, and the Lysander and Aletheia Piano Trios. They are top prizewinners in the Banff, Concert Artists Guild, Fischhoff, Melbourne, Naumburg, Osaka, Primrose, Queen Elisabeth, Rubinstein, Tchaikovsky, Tertis, and Young Concert Artists Competitions, and are some of the most sought-after solo and chamber performers of their generation. The Manhattan Chamber Players has been featured multiple times on NPR’s *Performance Today* and is the Ensemble-in-Residence at both the Northern Lights Music Festival in Mexico and Crescent City Chamber Music Festival in New Orleans. In addition to its

numerous concerts across the United States, Canada, and Mexico, MCP regularly tours in Asia and the Middle East, and has led chamber music residency programs at institutions throughout the United States and abroad.

**Joseph HAYDN — Trio for Piano, Violin, and Cello in G major, “Gypsy Rondo,” Hob. XV:25 (1795)**

Among the many friends Haydn made during his first stay in London, from January 1791 until late June 1792, was Mrs. Rebecca Schröter, the widow of Johann Samuel Schröter, music master to the queen and among the first advocates in England of the new fortepiano. Mrs. Schröter was an avid music lover and apparently trained in the art since she is known to have copied parts for Haydn. Strong feelings sprang up between Haydn and the good lady soon after they met in June 1791, though the story can be followed only in the letters from Mrs. Schröter that the composer copied into his notebook. Haydn made no other mention of the affair in his diary, except to note her address. Neither her originals nor Haydn’s replies have been found. Years later he showed the notes to his biographer A.C. Dies with the explanation, “They are letters from an English widow who loved me. Though sixty years old, she was still lovable and amiable, and, in all likelihood, I should have married her if I had been single.”

Mrs. Schröter filled her letters with expressions of admiration for Haydn’s music and for the man himself. “I am truly anxious and impatient to see you and wish to have as much of your company as possible: indeed, my D[ear]st H[aydn], I feel for you the fondest and tenderest affection the human heart is capable of, and I am ever with the firmest attachment, my D[ear] L[ove], Most Sincerely, faithfully, and most affectionately Yours,” she wrote on June 10, 1792. And a week earlier, after the last Salomon concert: “I shall ever consider the happiness of your acquaintance as one of the chief Blessings of my life, and it is the Sincere Wish of my heart to preserve, to cultivate, and to merit it more and more.” Mrs. Schröter, certainly, did not suffer from timidity, but Haydn was still married to the shrewish Maria Anna and he was unable to make a formal proposal to the English widow.

After a year and a half in Austria, Haydn returned to London in February 1794. Though there is no existing series of passionate letters from Mrs.

Schröter comparable to those of 1792, there is evidence that they resumed their relationship. Haydn took rooms in Bury Street, St. James's, only a ten-minute walk from Rebecca's house in James Street, Buckingham Gate; she witnessed an agreement between Haydn and a publisher the following year; and Haydn dedicated to her the three Piano Trios (Hob. XV:24-26) completed just before his departure from London in August 1795 and published by Longman & Broderip in October as Haydn's "Opus 73." Though there is nothing to suggest these lovely works were written for or "inspired by" Rebecca, their dedication remains a touching souvenir of one of Haydn's happiest friendships.

Haydn composed over thirty trios for piano, violin, and cello, almost half of them after 1790 when he had attained the pinnacle of his art. Far more than mere chips off the symphonic worktable, his chamber works are consistently pieces of substance, polish, and originality, and the three Trios he composed in London in the summer of 1795 (Hob. XV:24-26) are music of the highest order. The G major Trio (Hob. XV:25), with its irresistible "Gypsy Rondo" finale, became a favorite piece of English music lovers as soon as it was published in October 1795, and its popularity immediately spread across the Channel to infect the Continent. For this intimate work, Haydn eschewed the weighty sonata form found in most of his opening movements in favor of a set of variations on a charming *gallant* theme. Delicate arabesques and decorative filigree are applied to the theme by the violin and piano in the variations, which are given in alternating minor and major tonalities.

The second movement is a lovely song in three-part form. The finale was marked "Rondo, in the Gypsies' stile" in the first edition. It is based on several traditional 18th-century Hungarian songs popular among soldiers to lure new recruits into their ranks, the so-called *verbunkos* or "recruiting songs," which Haydn may have known from the Gypsy bands who occasionally played at Esterháza. The movement follows the traditional rondo structure, with contrasting thematic episodes separating the returns of the opening melody.

## **Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART — Quintet for Clarinet, Two Violins, Viola, and Cello in A major, K. 581 (1789)**

Mozart harbored a special fondness for the graceful agility, liquid tone, and ensemble amiability of the clarinet from the time he first heard the instrument as a young boy during his tours, and he later wrote for it whenever it was available. His greatest compositions for the instrument were inspired by the technical accomplishment and expressive playing of Anton Stadler, principal clarinetist of the Imperial Court Orchestra in Vienna and fellow Mason, for whom he wrote not only this Quintet, but also the Trio for Piano, Clarinet, and Viola (“Kegelstatt,” K. 498), the clarinet and basset horn parts in the vocal trios, the clarinet solos in the opera *La Clemenza di Tito*, the clarinet parts added to the second version of the G minor Symphony (K. 550), and the flawless Clarinet Concerto (K. 622), his last instrumental work, completed in October 1791, just two months before his death.

The last years of Mozart’s life were ones of troubled finances, ill health, and family problems that often forced him to beg for loans from others. It says much about his kindness and sensitivity that he, in turn, loaned Stadler money when he could, and even once gave him two gold watches to pawn when there was no cash at hand. The final accounting of Mozart’s estate after his death showed that Stadler owed him some 500 florins — several thousand dollars. The clarinet works he gave to his friend are beyond price.

The Quintet opens with a theme that is almost chaste in its purity and yet is, somehow, deeply introspective and immediately touching. As its initial punctuating arpeggios indicate, the clarinet’s role in the piece is not so much one of soloist in a miniature concerto (as is the wind instrument in the Horn Quintet, K. 407) as that of an equal partner to the string ensemble.

The second theme, a limpid, sweetly chromatic melody such as could have been conceived by no other musician of the time, not even Joseph Haydn, is given first by the violin and then by the clarinet above a delicate syncopated string accompaniment. A reference to the suave main theme closes the exposition and serves as the gateway to the development section, which is largely concerned with permutations of the arpeggiated

figures with which the clarinet made its entry in the opening measures. The recapitulation provides exquisite closure of the movement's formal structure and emotional progression.

The *Larghetto* achieves a state of exalted sublimity that makes it the instrumental counterpart to Sarastro's arias in *The Magic Flute*, which George Bernard Shaw once said were the only music fit to issue from the mouth of God. The *Menuetto* is fitted with two trios: the first, a somber minor-mode essay for strings alone, is perfectly balanced by the clarinet's lilting, Ländler-like strains in the second. The variations-form finale is more subdued and pensive than virtuosic and flamboyant and serves as a fitting conclusion to one of the most precious treasures in Mozart's peerless musical legacy.

### **Johannes BRAHMS — Quintet for Piano, Two Violins, Viola, and Cello in F minor, Op. 34 (1862-1864)**

When Brahms ambled into his favorite Viennese café one evening, so the story goes, a friend asked him how he had spent his day. "I was working on my symphony," he replied. "In the morning, I added an eighth note. In the afternoon I took it out." The anecdote may be apocryphal, but its intent faithfully reflects Brahms' painstaking process of creation, which is seen better perhaps nowhere than with the F minor Piano Quintet.

Brahms began work on the piece as a string quintet with two cellos, the same scoring as Schubert's incomparable C major Quintet, in early 1862, and by August, he had the first three movements ready to send to his friend and mentor Clara Schumann. On September 3rd, she replied: "I do not know how to start telling you the great delight your Quintet has given me. I have played it over many times, and I am full of it." When she received the finale in December, she wrote, "I think the last movement rounds the whole thing off splendidly The work is a masterpiece."

The violinist Joseph Joachim also received a copy of the new score from Brahms. At first, he was enthusiastic, writing to the composer on November 5, 1862, "This piece of music is certainly of the greatest importance and is strong in character." After playing through the Quintet several times over the ensuing six months, however, he had reservations about it. "The details of the work show some proof of overpowering strength," he noted, "but what is lacking, to give me pure pleasure, is, in a word, charm. After a time, on

hearing the work quietly, I think you will feel the same as I do about it.” Brahms tinkered with the score to satisfy Joachim’s objections, and had it played privately in Vienna, but decided that medium and music were still unhappily matched.

By February 1863, the String Quintet had been recast as a Sonata for Two Pianos, which Brahms performed with Karl Tausig at a concert in Vienna on April 17, 1864. The premiere met with little critical favor. Clara continued to be delighted with the work’s musical substance but thought that “it cannot be called a Sonata. Rather it is a work so full of ideas that it requires an orchestra for its interpretation. [Those were the years before the First Symphony appeared, when Clara constantly encouraged Brahms to write something in that grand genre.] These ideas are for the most part lost on the piano. The first time I tried the work I had the feeling that it was an arrangement. Please, remodel it once more!”

One final time, during the summer of 1864, Brahms revised the score, this time as a Quintet for Piano, Two Violins, Viola, and Cello, an ensemble suggested to him by the conductor Hermann Levi. “The Quintet is beautiful beyond words,” Levi wrote. “You have turned a monotonous work for two pianos into a thing of great beauty, a masterpiece of chamber music.” The Quintet was published by Rieter-Biedermann in 1865 and given its formal public premiere in Paris on March 24, 1868. Unlike the original strings-only version of the work, which he destroyed (Brahms was almost pathologically secretive about his sketches and unfinished works), he also allowed the Sonata for Two Pianos to be published in 1872, though not through normal channels but by Princess Anna von Hessen, to whom the score was dedicated.

Brahms’ F minor Piano Quintet, his only work for that combination of instruments, is perhaps the most serious and epic of his chamber music. It shows the confluence of styles that marks his greatest compositions: the formal strength and developmental ingenuity of Beethoven; the efflorescent counterpoint of Bach; the rich, chromatic harmony of Schumann. Also, among the roster of influences in this piece must be counted the music of Schubert, about whom Brahms wrote to Adolf Schubring in 1863, “My love for Schubert is of a very serious kind, probably because it is not just a fleeting infatuation. Where else is there a genius like his?”

The opening movement — tempestuous and tragic in mood, not unlike the D minor Piano Concerto, completed in 1859 — is in a tightly packed sonata form. The dramatic main theme is stated immediately in unison by violin, cello, and piano, and then repeated with greater force by the entire ensemble. The complementary theme, given in C-sharp minor above an insistently repeated triplet figuration, is more subdued and lyrical in nature than the previous melody. The closing theme achieves the brighter tonality of A-flat major to offer a brief respite from the movement’s pervasive strong emotions. The development section treats the main and second themes, and, also like the First Piano Concerto, ushers in the recapitulation on a great wave of sound.

The Schubertian strain rises closest to the surface in the tender second movement. The outer sections of the three-part form (A–B–A) are based on a gentle, lyrical strain in sweet, close-interval harmonies, while the movement’s central portion uses a melody incorporating an octave-leap motive.

The *Scherzo* is one of Brahms’ most electrifying essays. The *Scherzo* proper comprises three elements: a rising theme of vague rhythmic identity; a snapping motive in strict, dotted rhythm; and a march-like strain in full chordal harmony. These three components are juxtaposed throughout the movement, with the dotted- rhythm theme being given special prominence, including a vigorous fugal working-out. The central trio grows from a theme that is a lyrical transformation of the *Scherzo*’s chordal march strain.

The Finale opens with a pensive slow introduction fueled by deeply felt chromatic harmonies, exactly the sort of passage that caused Arnold Schoenberg to label Brahms a “modernist.” The body of the movement, in fast tempo, is a hybrid of rondo and sonata forms, a formal technique that finds its roots in the music of Haydn. Despite the buoyant, Gypsy flavor of the movement’s thematic material, the tragic tenor of this great Quintet is maintained until its closing page.

