

## Montrose Trio & Friends

Friday, April 28, 2017 at 8:00 pm

This is the 720th concert in Koerner Hall

### The Montrose Trio

**Jon Kimura Parker**, piano

**Martin Beaver**, violin

**Clive Greensmith**, cello

**Allyson McHardy**, mezzo-soprano e-mailed Barry to confirm everyone's in

**Erika Raum**, violin

**Teng Li**, viola

**Barry Shiffman**, viola

**Sharon Wei**, viola

**Desmond Hoebig**, cello

### PROGRAM

Selection by winners of the Glenn Gould School Chamber Music Competition

Johannes Brahms: Two Songs for alto voice, with viola and piano accompaniment, Op. 91

*Gestillte Sehnsucht*

*Geistliches Wiegenlied*

(Jon Kimura Parker, Barry Shiffman, Allyson McHardy)

Johannes Brahms: Piano Trio No. 1 in B Major, Op. 8

I. Allegro con brio

II. Scherzo: Allegro molto

III. Adagio

IV. Allegro

(The Montrose Trio)

### INTERMISSION

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky: *Souvenir de Florence*, String Sextet in D Minor, Op. 70

I. Allegro con spirit

II. Adagio cantabile e con moto

III. Allegretto moderato

IV. Allegro vivace

(Martin Beaver, Erika Raum, Teng Li, Sharon Wei, Clive Greensmith, Desmond Hoebig)

## Johannes Brahms

Born in Hamburg, Germany, May 7, 1833; died in Vienna, Austria, April 3, 1897

**Two Songs for alto voice, with viola and piano accompaniment, Op. 91**

***Gestillte Sehnsucht* (Stilled Longing) (1884)**

***Geistliches Wiegenlied* (Sacred Lullaby) (1863-4)**

The only solo Lieder by Brahms to include two instruments rather than solo piano, these two songs were both written for the singer Amalie Schneeweiss and her husband, violinist (and violist) Joseph Joachim. The earliest, *Geistliches Wiegenlied* (Sacred Lullaby), was given to the couple in celebration of their wedding in 1863, then revised with the

birth of their first child, named Johannes in honour of the composer. *Gestillte Sehnsucht* (Stilled Longing) followed two decades later, with the hope that the divorce proceedings Joachim had filed against his wife would go no further. With Brahms eventually testifying in Amelie's defence, a rift was soon to develop between violinist and composer as well.

Both songs, two of Brahms's greatest, open with expansive instrumental introductions, establishing both the mood and main musical material. The similarity in timbre between alto voice and viola is expertly exploited, often as though in a vocal duet. *Gestillte Sehnsucht*, to a text by Friedrich Rückert, contrasts the glow of an evening in the countryside with restless feelings of love. Voice and viola interweave throughout, building to a feeling of hopeful resolution. The viola introduces the 14<sup>th</sup> century German carol *Lieber Joseph, Joseph Mein* as the *Geistliches Wiegenlied* opens. Out of it, Brahms draws voice and piano melodies by inverting the carol and setting a text by German poet Emanuel Geibel based on a 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish poem by Lope de Vega. It is a perfect complement to the old German carol, both texts telling of Mary asking for help in rocking her child Jesus to sleep.

### **Piano Trio in B Major, Op. 8 (1853-4, rev. 1889)**

This B Major Trio is both the first and last work Brahms wrote in the medium of piano trio. He wrote the first version in 1853-4 and published it as his Op. 8. Then, late in life, in 1889, when a new publisher acquired rights to his chamber music compositions, Brahms took the opportunity to rewrite the piece. He tightened its expansive style, simplified its structure, and used its themes as the building blocks of what is essentially a new work. It is one third shorter than the original. What is striking about the process is that Brahms sustains the youthful energy of the first version. "I did not provide it with a wig," he said in a manner calculated to confuse, "I just arranged its hair a little!" It is this revised version, written after a lifetime of composition and after almost 100 published works, that is usually played today. Brahms jokingly referred to it as his Op. 108, rather than his Op. 8.

In the 'new' Op. 8, Brahms retains the lyrical opening theme. It is instantly recognisable as Brahmsian, being characteristically nutty brown in colour, somewhat wistful in mood. Its expansive nature, on the scale of Beethoven's "Archduke" trio, ensures that the broad sweep of the opening movement will remain, though this is virtually all that does remain from the early version of the trio. Other Brahmsian thumbprints, like hemiola patterns and additional rhythmical shifts, add new energy and direction to the music. The deftly scurrying Scherzo pays homage to Mendelssohn. Together with its broadly lilting, waltz-like trio, it is virtually unchanged from the 1854 publication. The slow movement has a clear, three-part form. Its solemn, chorale-like opening again shows the influence of the "Archduke" trio, but speaks in Brahms's mature voice. The questioning B minor cello theme that opens the finale introduces a note of disquiet and restlessness, but it immediately gives way to a brightly assertive D major second theme that introduces a valedictory tone to the movement. Although the music ends in the minor, its mood is confident and hard-won.

## **Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky**

Born in Kamsko-Votkinsk, Russia, April 25/May 7, 1840; died in St. Petersburg, Russia, October 25/November 6, 1893

### ***Souvenir de Florence*, String Sextet in D Minor, Op. 70 (1887-92)**

In addition to a picturesque subtitle in French evoking one of the most celebrated Italian cities, Tchaikovsky returned from his travels with one more 'souvenir' from Florence. It is a glorious, operatic love duet between violin and cello which he unwraps during the slow movement of his String Sextet, Op. 70, his final chamber work. He wrote the theme during a three-month stay in the legendary Tuscan capital while completing his final full length opera, *The Queen of Spades*. For the rest of this bright, untroubled string sextet, the music is purely Russian, with a characteristic emotional intensity running throughout its four movements. After initial sketches, Tchaikovsky worked quickly, doing the main draft in 1890 in less than two weeks and scoring it in a further 11 days. After a private reading of the manuscript, followed by a public performance for the commissioning St. Petersburg Chamber Music Society, Tchaikovsky remained unhappy with the sextet for pairs of violins, violas, and cellos and laid it aside for another year. "I'm hampered not by lack of ideas but by the novelty of the form," Tchaikovsky confessed to his brother Modest. "There must be six independent and, at the same time, homogeneous parts." To the pianist Alexander Siloti he said: "I constantly feel as though I am in fact writing for the orchestra and just rearranging it for six string instruments." After substantial changes to the third and fourth movements in 1892, Tchaikovsky grew more comfortable with the piece and, after further performances, even mused about writing a second sextet.

The orchestral sweep of the opening movement provides a visceral, virtuoso challenge for string players. Its impact is altogether different from the intimacy of a string quartet, while its technical challenge in performance is often that of soloist versus orchestra. "The first movement must be played with a great deal of passion and drive," Tchaikovsky wrote. "The second, lilting. The third, facetious. The fourth, gay and determined." The famous serenade-like melody in the slow movement, Tchaikovsky's 'souvenir,' has the character of a pas de deux in one of his ballets. A ghostly, contrasting middle section leads to a return of the pas de deux. Both the scherzo and finale are dominated by folksong-like melodies, with an intensity and urgency to the music that speaks strongly to the Russian soul. The compelling fugal writing of the finale was aimed to please the predominantly German membership of the St. Petersburg Chamber Music Society, who presented the composer with their medal of merit. It also pleased Tchaikovsky himself: "Ah Modest," he wrote to his brother, "my sextet is wonderful and the fugue at the end is charming. It is terrible how thrilled I am with my own work ..."

- Program notes © 2017 Keith Horner

## Montrose Trio

Formed in 2014, the Montrose Trio is a collaboration stemming from a long and fruitful relationship between pianist Jon Kimura Parker and the Tokyo String Quartet. The Trio gave its debut performance for the Chamber Music Society of Detroit, with subsequent performances at Wolftrap, in Montreal, and at the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival. In 2016-17, it performs in cities including Cleveland, Indianapolis, Portland, Houston, Phoenix, and Toronto.

Pianist Jon Kimura Parker appears this season with the orchestras of Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, Ottawa, Vancouver, Toronto, Colorado, and Washington, DC. He is Artistic Advisor of the Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival and Professor of Piano at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University in Houston.

Violinist Martin Beaver has appeared with the orchestras of San Francisco, Indianapolis, Montreal, Toronto, and in Belgium and Portugal. A top prizewinner at the international violin competitions of Indianapolis and Montreal, he was a founding member of the Toronto String Quartet and Triskelion, and was the first violinist of the Tokyo String Quartet for 11 years. He is currently on faculty at the Colburn School in LA.

Cellist Clive Greensmith has performed as soloist with the London Symphony, the Royal Philharmonic, the English Chamber Orchestra, the Mostly Mozart Orchestra, the Seoul Philharmonic, and the RAI orchestra in Rome. He was the cellist in the Tokyo String Quartet for 14 years and is currently on faculty at the Colburn School in LA.

**Allyson McHardy's** varied opera repertoire encompasses roles from Händel to Verdi and from Saint-Saëns to Heggie. In the 2016-17 season, she makes her debut in China as the Aix-en-Provence production of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* tours to the Beijing Music Festival; takes on the role of Julie Riel in the Canadian Opera Company's new production of Harry Somer's *Louis Riel* at the Four Seasons Centre in Toronto and in Ottawa with the National Arts Centre Orchestra, presented as part of the celebrations surrounding Canada's 150th Anniversary. She also appears with the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Mozart's *Requiem* and with the Seattle Symphony in Ligeti's *Requiem*.

**Erika Raum** has played the violin professionally since age 12. Since winning the Joseph Szigeti International Violin Competition in 1992, she has been invited to Europe on many occasions, including Portugal, Austria, Germany, England, Italy, France, and Hungary. She also performs with the ARC Ensemble (Artists of The Royal Conservatory), and has attended festivals abroad at Caramoor, Budapest, and Prussia Cove. In high demand as a chamber musician, Erika performs regularly with the distinguished pianist Anton Kuerti, with whom she recorded a landmark CD of Czerny's piano and violin works. She is on the faculty at The Royal Conservatory of Music.

Graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music, **Teng Li** is establishing herself as a diverse and dynamic performer internationally. Along with her Toronto Symphony Orchestra solo appearances, she has performed with the National Chamber Orchestra, the Santa Rosa Symphony, the Munich Chamber Orchestra, the Haddonfield Symphony, Shanghai Opera Orchestra, the Canadian Sinfonietta, and Esprit Orchestra. Ms Li has won top Prizes at the Johanson International and the Holland-America Music Society competitions, the Primrose International Viola Competition, the Irving M. Klein International String Competition and the ARD International Music Competition in Munich, Germany.

**Barry Shiffman** enjoys a rich career as a performer, teacher, recording artist, and administrator. At The Royal Conservatory, he serves as Associate Dean and Director of Chamber Music for The Glenn Gould School and Director of The Phil and Eli Taylor Performance Academy for Young Artists. He has recently been appointed Artistic Director of Rockport Music in Massachusetts and continues his work at The Banff Centre as Executive Artistic Director of The Banff International String Quartet Competition. He was a founding member of the St. Lawrence String Quartet (1989-2006), and studied at The Royal Conservatory, the University of Toronto, The Juilliard School, Yale University, The Hartt School of Music, and the Utrecht Conservatory in the Netherlands.

**Sharon Wei** is a dynamic and varied musician, establishing herself as one of the most respected violists on the scene today. She has appeared as soloist, chamber musician, and guest principal violist throughout North America and Europe, and has collaborated with conductors such as James Levine, Kent Nagano, Paavo Järvi, Zubin Mehta, Jean Christophe Spinosi, and Yuri Termirkanov. With pianist Angela Park, she co-founded Ensemble Made in Canada, which performs in various configurations: sonatas, duos, and quartet repertoire. She was on the faculty at Yale University and Stanford University and began her appointment as Assistant Professor of Viola at Western University in 2014.

Cellist **Desmond Hoebig** is on the faculty at The Glenn Gould School as well as Professor of Cello at the Shepherd School of Music, Rice University. He won the First Prize at the Munich International Competition, the Grand Prize of the CBC Talent Competition, and the Canadian Music Competition, and was also an award winner at the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow. He has had a distinguished career as a soloist, and orchestral and chamber musician, appearing throughout North America, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Japan, Mexico, and Columbia. He has also been principal cellist of the Cleveland, Houston, and Cincinnati Symphony Orchestras.

*Jon Kimura Parker made his Royal Conservatory debut on November 8, 2009, during Koerner Hall's inaugural concert season. Erika Raum made her Koerner Hall debut on April 26, 2011 and Barry Shiffman on March 1, 2013. All of the other artists are making their debuts tonight.*

*Please join us for a postlude performance with **students from The Glenn Gould School** in the Leslie & Anna Dan Galleria.*