

# Rosalie Piano Trio

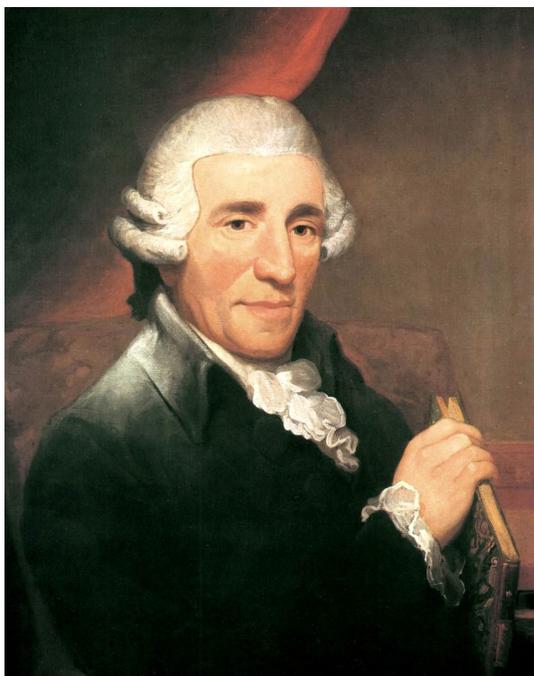
Roman Carranza, violin - Paul Christopher, cello - Chialing Hseih, piano

## Program Notes by Jackson Harmeyer

It has become a tradition to close our festival with a performance by the Rosalie Piano Trio, our resident ensemble. They again close our Third Annual festival with music by Joseph Haydn, Dmitri Shostakovich, and Erich Wolfgang Korngold. Their performance this year honors the memory of Hope Norman whose patronage of the arts and stewardship of Rosalie has allowed this to become home to our festival. It is with some satisfaction that I can announce that our festival will close with the Piano Trio by Korngold, for Korngold was a student of Alexander Zemlinsky whose *Humoreske* opened our festival on Friday evening. This itself brings a circularity to our efforts, but so does the fact that he was a Jewish composer, forced to leave Europe with the rise of the Nazi regime. Zemlinsky, recall, was also forced to escape, though Pavel Haas was less fortunate. Additionally, Korngold's music, as an extension of the Viennese Classical-Romantic tradition, also concludes this, another line of thought, which has been evoked through works by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, and others. Lastly, Korngold's Trio, a work which is only now gaining fuller appreciation, speaks to our interest in programming lesser-known pieces, including those by our own Louisiana composers, Tom Hundemer and Todd Gabriel. Thank you for joining us this weekend, and please enjoy the final concert of our Third Annual Sugarmill Music Festival!

### Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Keyboard Trio in B-flat major, Hob. XV:38



Joseph Haydn

The keyboard trios of Joseph Haydn, although not as well-known as his string quartets, mark the other major contribution to the category of chamber music made by this composer. There survive approximately thirty to forty trios, some written in the 1760s or earlier with the final trios appearing in 1797. Like the quartet and symphony, the trio was a genre still in development in the second half of the eighteenth century. Although Haydn brought these other genres to their first mature forms, he did not accomplish the same feat in regards to the keyboard trio: the independence of all three instruments which we associate as so inseparable from this genre is absent even in the latest of Haydn's trios. The earlier trios in particular are more like keyboard sonatas with violin and cello accompaniment and, though the keyboard remains the dominant instrument, the added strings contribute to a timbre full of richness. This is not an indication of failure, however. The charming trios are full of sentiment and imagination, hallmarks we expect from the music of Haydn.

In the late eighteenth century, keyboard trios were typically intended for amateur players rather than professionals. "Amateur" in no way implies "beginner" though. Many amateurs possessed incredible skill: they simply were not paid to make music, but instead practiced and performed out of a love for music. The keyboard, especially, as a lady's instrument, was expected to be learned by daughters of well-to-do families. These young ladies would often entertain guests at social gatherings by playing trios as accompanied by a violinist and cellist, or sometimes just a violinist if a cellist was not present.

Typically, the cello would merely double the keyboard's bass line, giving it additional strength to account for the quick decay of notes played on the harpsichord and early pianos. This was a practice that went back at least as far as the Baroque *basso continuo*. The artistry of Haydn's trios, despite what we might view retrospectively as shortcomings, makes them rewarding compositions to be played by amateurs and professionals alike.

The Trio in B-flat major heard this afternoon is an earlier work, likely dating from the 1760s, a time when the keyboard part could just as easily have been played on piano as harpsichord, depending on which instrument was available. There survive at least

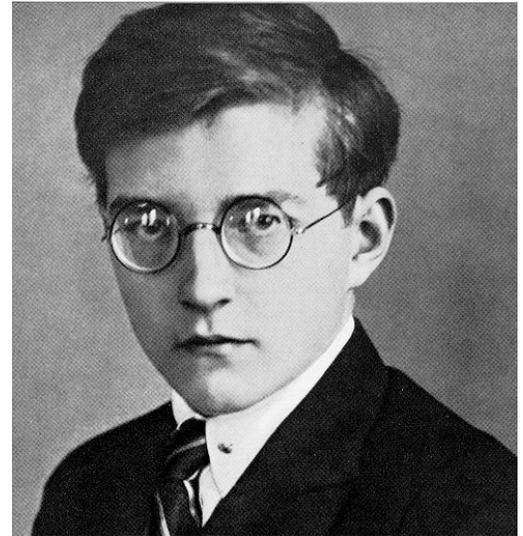
eleven keyboard trios written in or around the 1760s. Although Haydn's authorship is questionable for many of these, he was at least willing to claim the B-flat Trio heard today when asked in old age if he had composed it. Its movement structure is not totally conventional: although it begins with a fast movement according to sonata principle and closes with another fast movement, the middle movement is not slow and lyrical as would become common practice, but is instead a menuet encapsulating a trio. A menuet would, of course, have been the third movement in a typical symphony or quartet layout. Remember though that, in the early stages of his career, Haydn was still defining many of the practices that would become convention after his model. These things were not in place before Haydn.

The delightful first movement is marked *Allegro moderato*. Though guided by sonata principle, the brevity of its themes, centered on B-flat and F, recommend the example of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach who was also active at that time and whose music Haydn admired. The dominance of the piano is affirmed in the way that the violin largely echoes the melody first presented by the piano whereas the cello doubles the piano's bass line on the spot. The violin, however, does gain some momentary priority by reintroducing the first theme before the piano to initiate the recapitulation, leaving its partner to become the echo. The second movement, *Menuet*, is joyful, if somewhat cocky in its self-assurance. The central trio opens with a sudden dash into the relative key, G minor. It stays there only briefly, however, and before long we hear the return to the menuet section. The third movement, *Finale. Presto*, is not only the quickest of the three in terms of tempo, but also the briefest in length. Like the first movement, it follows sonata principle moving from exposition to development and ending in recapitulation.

### **Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)**

#### **Piano Trio No. 1 in C minor, Op. 8**

When we think of Dmitri Shostakovich, often we imagine the towering figure of Soviet music who challenged the tyranny of Stalin to become, despite Party strictures, a champion of the people. There is much mythology wrapped up in this image, most untrue, for even though Shostakovich had his various struggles with Soviet officialdom, he ultimately could not escape the restraints they placed on music and even joined the Communist Party in 1960 as his health continued to decline. In fact, Shostakovich suffered physically and emotionally throughout his life, and often could be found cowering at premieres of his more public works for fear that they might inspire condemnation. Instead, the image we should see of Shostakovich is of a man who persisted in spite of personal and political difficulties to maintain the integrity of his art, a man with enough skill and enough awareness to know how to adjust his art to meet the various restrictions imposed upon him. Anything more is either speculation or empty sensationalism.



**Dmitri Shostakovich**

We cannot listen to the Piano Trio No. 1 in C minor, Op. 8, at least not with any real understanding, without first abandoning the grand image initially described. It is a personal work, intimate even, created by an ill sixteen year-old student, written while he was away from school recovering at a sanatorium in the Crimea. In summer 1923 when the Trio was composed, Shostakovich was a student of the Petrograd Conservatory and, although one of their most promising, he did not always agree with the teachings of his composition professor. This instructor was Maximilian Steinberg, the son-in-law to Rimsky-Korsakov from whom he had inherited what were by then fairly conservative practices. Their relationship remained respectful, but Steinberg often could not comprehend the young Shostakovich's fascination with what the older man considered Western grotesqueries. Shostakovich instead combined the discipline of Steinberg's approach with his own need for experimentation, a combination which would follow him throughout his career.

Beyond his studies, Shostakovich was also facing personal difficulties at this time. His father had died from pneumonia a year earlier in February 1922. This had forced his mother to take up typing to support the family, and his sister also began giving piano lessons to contribute to their financial wellbeing. When things still had not improved by October 1924, Shostakovich began playing piano for silent films to add to his family's collective income. On a national scale, the Russian Civil War had just ended which meant that arts institutions like the Conservatory were severely underfunded, so that classes were sometimes taught in frigid conditions without access to proper heating. Of immediate concern, Shostakovich had developed tuberculosis in spring 1923, and an untimely surgery meant that he had to give his piano examinations with bandages still on his neck. Alexander Glazunov, director of the Conservatory, recognized Shostakovich's talent and did the best he could to protect him; Glazunov, in fact, was the one who had arranged for him to stay at the sanatorium in the summer of 1923.

New motivation came, however, when that summer he met Tatyana Glivenko with whom he quickly fell in love. Their relationship had all the intensity of young love, and even after they returned home—him to Petrograd and her to Moscow—their relationship

remained warm. Some scholars have speculated that Tatyana was the greatest love of his life. They would spend the summer of 1925 together and meet occasionally when he would visit Moscow. Even after her marriage to another man in 1929, Shostakovich remained hopeful that she would leave her husband to live instead with him. Only after the birth of her first child in 1932 did Shostakovich agree to marry Nina Varzar, a woman who he cared for deeply although they agreed to have an open marriage. It is to Tatyana, his first love, that the Piano Trio is dedicated.

The Trio, Shostakovich's earliest essay in chamber music, is in one long movement which, albeit, moves through several sections and tempo changes. It possesses much of the grotesquerie which Steinberg could not understand about Shostakovich's music, but also a tender second theme reflective of his feelings toward Tatyana. The Trio begins with a slow introduction, marked *andante*, in which silky, chromatic lines in the violin and cello are contrasted with a chordal accompaniment, inherited from nineteenth-century pianism. A rhythmic element enters at *molto più mosso* with the piano momentarily taking charge as leader. The violin and cello soon wrest control with rapid figurations that fluctuate in intensity. Their struggle reaches a dissonant climax before the slower introduction returns and the building process starts over again.

About four minutes in, there comes another pause at which point the tender second theme enters, signaled by shimmering parallel thirds in the treble register of the piano. The cello, as a soloist above this piano accompaniment, presents the second theme by itself. The chromaticism of earlier is gone from this theme which is then echoed by the violin. The piano eventually contributes its own dancing figures. As if according to sonata form, a development section soon begins where the first and second themes are intermingled. The struggles of earlier return as do familiar motives. Ultimately, this all yields to a reprise of the slow introduction which had opened the piece and, from which, new ideas related to the second theme now emerge. A coda, marked *allegro*, closes the piece, moving from darker material related to the first theme into brighter moments drawn from the second theme.

The Piano Trio No. 1, still a student work, was never given a formal premiere. Instead, its first performances were at the Moscow Conservatory in April 1924, where Shostakovich had thought about transferring to finish his studies away from Steinberg, and then again later that year as a film accompaniment at the Petrograd cinema where Shostakovich was employed. Nor was the Piano Trio ever published in Shostakovich's lifetime. Only after his death did his pupil Boris Tishchenko publish the Trio, reassembling the final twenty-two bars of the piano part from incomplete autograph sources.

## Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957)

### Piano Trio in D major, Op. 1

Alongside Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Felix Mendelssohn, Erich Wolfgang Korngold is regarded as one of the great child prodigies of music history. So much of what Korngold accomplished was at so young an age: in fact, his late Romantic aesthetic was already fully-formed before the outbreak of World War I in 1914, although he was not yet twenty at the time. Indeed, his early fame made it possible for him to become one of Hollywood's leading composers when the annexation of his native Austria by the Nazi regime in 1938 made it necessary for he and his family to relocate to California. Yet, after the war, when he sought to return to composing music for the concert hall, his unchanged aesthetic stance was viewed as so outdated, that he could find few European orchestras willing to take up his music. Since Korngold's death in 1957, however, his music has found an increasing number of advocates with his Violin Concerto, especially, winning popular acclaim in recent years.

Korngold composed his Piano Trio in D major, Op. 1 between December 1909 and April 1910, when he was but twelve years of age. A few years earlier, Korngold had so impressed Gustav Mahler that the established conductor and composer declared him a genius and recommended him for study with Alexander Zemlinsky. This teacher passed to Korngold the rich, harmonic language of Mahler, Richard Strauss, and, of course, his own compositions. Korngold later admitted of his mentor, "I remain unshakeable in my grateful veneration of Zemlinsky—teacher, conductor, and creative genius." His Piano Trio has a certain indebtedness to Zemlinsky's own Trio in D minor of fourteen years earlier, but in other ways far surpasses this man's work. As if evidence of what the young Korngold had achieved, its premiere in July 1910 was given by no less musicians than violinist Arnold Rosé, cellist Adolf Buxbaum, and pianist Bruno Walter, who was already better-known as a conductor. Within the year, it had been performed as far away as New York City.



Erich Wolfgang Korngold

The first movement, marked *Allegro non troppo, con espressione*, follows a typical nineteenth-century sonata form. Its resplendent first theme is introduced in the piano before it is taken up by the violin and cello in tandem. The second theme, which all three instruments introduce as partners, enters almost without notice, for the transition from the first to the second themes happens so smoothly. Chromatic sequences here, as elsewhere, contribute not to tension but to a lush, relaxed atmosphere. The exposition is repeated before the development begins in the minor. Little time is spent in the minor, although there are some drastic modulations to foreign keys throughout the wide-ranging development. The recapitulation, appropriately, reintroduces both the first and second themes, adding fresh material in the meantime. Throughout the movement, a wide descending interval, sometimes of a fifth but sometimes larger, in the stings serves as a reoccurring motive. There is also a tendency for the instruments to play in their upper registers or switch registers unexpectedly.

The second movement, *Scherzo. Allegro*, is equally rich in its chromaticism, already obscuring its key signature from the pick-up measure. After a brief but grand introduction, the sprightly theme enters in the piano, before being echoed by the strings. Large chords in the piano and runs in all three instruments intersect playfully with the theme, suggesting the original meaning of “scherzo” as “joke.” There is also something waltz-like which hints at Korngold’s own Vienna. The trio section which follows the scherzo proper moves at a leisurely, almost lazy, pace, resigned to not do much of anything. The wide descending intervals of the first movement come back, answered now by wide ascending intervals. The repeated scherzo is written-out, allowing for a few changes particularly toward the movement’s end.

The third movement, *Larghetto*, is lyrical and free-flowing. The solo cello, playing in its upper register, introduces the movement’s melody at the very beginning with the piano soon adding a minimal accompaniment. The violin enters several measures in, echoing the melody of the cello. These partners guide the melody throughout the remainder of the movement with a formal freedom bordering fantasy. Several textures dominate our attention as the movement progresses, including a section where both strings play pizzicato exclusively followed immediately by their playing in tremolo style. These sections allows the piano, still playing in thick block chords, to become leader. Later, the texture changes again when the piano shifts to arpeggios, creating a shimmering effect over which the strings reintroduce the melody that had opened the movement. Overall, this allows the movement to take on a roughly ternary form.

The fourth movement, marked *Finale. Allegro molto e energico*, is formally the most free of any of the four movements. Several ideas are offered at the very outset: the most memorable include the cutting strings that open the movement; a dancing, triplet line in the piano; and a daring, elongated trill in the strings. The movement’s main theme, however, only enters about two minutes in, notably in octaves between all three instruments before a degree of separation occurs. This swaying theme has the feeling of a lullaby and reoccurs several times throughout, giving the slight impression of rondo form. References to the movement’s opening gestures as well as motives from earlier movements skew this impression though. Again, there emerges elements of the waltz, aptly bestowing a Viennese feel to this otherwise fairly abstract music.

© Jackson Harmeyer 2018



**About Jackson.** Jackson Harmeyer is a graduate student pursuing his master’s degree in musicology at the University of Louisville where, in April 2017, he was awarded the Gerhard Herz Music History Scholarship. Previously, Jackson graduated *summa cum laude* from the Louisiana Scholars’ College in Natchitoches, Louisiana following the completion of his undergraduate thesis, “Learning from the Past: The Influence of Johann Sebastian Bach upon the Soviet Composers.” From 2014 to 2016, Jackson served as director of the successful chamber music series, Abendmusik Alexandria, and since that time has remained concert annotator for presenters of classical music across Louisiana. His current research interests include French spectral music and the compositions of Kaija Saariaho. He recently shared this research in March 2018 at the American Musicological Society South-Central Chapter’s annual meeting in Asheville, North Carolina.

Also a composer, Jackson has worked to integrate the vocabulary and grammar of modern music into compositions which are not only innovative but also engaging to the general listener. His compositions have been performed at the Sugarmill Music Festival and New Music on the Bayou.

Read additional program notes by Jackson at [www.JacksonHarmeyer.com](http://www.JacksonHarmeyer.com).