

Christopher's Classics - Series XXVII 2022

presents

Aroha Trio



Schubert, Fisher, Dohnányi, Françaix and Beethoven

Presented by
Sunday Classics Inc

Elizabeth Ball Trust

Tuesday, September 27th, 2022, 7:30 PM
The Piano, 156 Armagh St, Christchurch



The busiest lives deserve beautiful music.

Programme

Franz Schubert - *String Trio in B flat major, D471*

Salina Fisher - *'Mata-Au' for String Trio (2021)*

Ernö Dohnányi - *Serenade in C Major for String Trio, Op. 10*

Interval (15 minutes)

Jean Françaix - *String Trio (1933)*

Ludwig van Beethoven - *Serenade in D for String Trio, Op. 8*

Aroha Trio

Haihong Liu (violin)

Zhongxian Jin (viola)

Robert Ibell (cello)

Acclaimed as demonstrating "accomplished brilliance, soulfulness and sublime intensity in perfect balance and tonal unity" (The Dominion Post), the Aroha String Quartet is firmly established as one of New Zealand's finest chamber music ensembles.

Founded in 2004, this versatile Wellington-based quartet is known for its passionate musicality, impressive technique, and multicultural innovation.

The Aroha Quartet is committed to presenting string quartet works from western classical and avant-garde repertoire to traditional Chinese folk music, as well as works for larger forces through collaborations with numerous high-profile musicians.

The Aroha Quartet performs regularly around NZ in centres from the Deep South to the Far North. In 2014 they performed five concerts as part of Chamber Music New Zealand's Kaleidoscope series. Overseas trips have seen them participate in the prestigious International Summer Academy in Austria in 2010, give concerts and masterclasses in China in 2010 and 2013, and perform at the Huntington Music Festival in Australia in 2011.

The Aroha Quartet runs the annual ASQ International Music Academy, a week-long chamber music course. The eighth ASQ Academy took place in Wellington in mid July 2022. The Quartet's third ASQ International Academy in Asia took place in Zhongshan, China, in late January 2020.

Programme Notes

Franz Schubert

String Trio in B flat major, D 471

- I. *Allegro*
- II. *Andante sostenuto* (fragment)

During the autumn of 1816, Schubert had finally left his much-loathed teaching post and moved in with his close friend Franz Schober.

At age of 18, away from his overcrowded and repressive family home, sharing accommodation with a charismatic young man whose experience of life was far wider than his own, and in a vastly improved frame of mind, Schubert began to pour forth new compositions, including this String Trio. Schubert finished the first movement and wrote 39 bars of a slow movement in E flat major.

The Trio represents a veritable microcosm of musical activity, with its relatively untroubled and highly lyrical exposition and recapitulation, dramatically heightened by a more serious central development section,

This miniature gem is one of the most treasured works in the string repertoire.

Salina Fisher

'Mata-Au' for String Trio

Mata-Au was commissioned by the At The World's Edge Festival and composed in 2021.

Mata-Au, the Māori name of the Clutha River, means 'surface current'. In Japanese, the homophonous phrase 'また逢う' (mata-au) means 'to meet again'.

The water dances and swirls as it connects places and people. It flows and gushes with forward momentum and anticipation.

In writing this piece I was also inspired by 'spring', both as the season of its premiere, and as a bubbling source of water.

[note by the composer]

Ernő Dohnányi

Serenade in C major for String Trio, Op. 10

- I. *Marcia. Allegro*
- II. *Romanza. Adagio non troppo*
- III. *Scherzo. Vivace*
- IV. *Tema con variazioni. Andante con moto*
- V. *Rondo*

In his *Serenade*, composed between 1902 and 1904, Dohnányi created one of the exemplars of the form, a multi-movement suite packed with musical riches.

Following tradition, the *Serenade* begins with a lively March featuring a rustic tune full of Hungarian flavour.

A slow movement, *Romanze*, follows evoking the traditional serenade once again with guitar-like pizzicati and a lyrical song in the viola part, interrupted briefly by a passionate outburst.

The third-movement *Scherzo* flexes more modern muscles with a bristling fugue and a tuneful trio that combine simultaneously in the *scherzo* reprise.

A melancholy, hymn-like theme provides the basis for a brooding set of variations as another slow movement leading to a rollicking *Rondo* finale that suggests the influence of Beethoven's string trios as models.

The opening March cleverly reemerges to close the *Serenade* with pleasing symmetry.

Jean Françaix

String Trio (1933)

- I. *Allegretto vivo*
- II. *Scherzo*
- III. *Andante*
- IV. *Rondo. Vivo*

Jean Françaix's jaunty Trio à cordes is bursting with charm and humour – not a surprise for a composer for whom there was no border between “serious” and “entertaining.”

Through all the avant-garde trends of the 20th century, Françaix stayed true to his own vision, remaining a neoclassicist whose tonal works are distinguished by rhythmic verve, melodic elegance, fastidious craftsmanship, and an ever-present sense of fun.

All of these traits are in evidence in his early *String Trio*, a witty, graceful, and utterly delightful work. The perpetual-motion *Allegretto vivo* sets the tone: it is brief and playful, with muted strings scurrying around snatches of melody, and with occasional pizzicati adding to the chatter. The rhythmic drive continues in a boisterous, harmonically rich *Scherzo*. Here the wit is more satiric, especially in the lurching trio, which suggests the movements of a drunken boulevardier.

The third-movement Andante is an island of calm that shows Françaix's gift for cantabile melody, as violin, cello, and viola take turns playing a tender song. With the concluding Rondo the Trio returns to its rambunctious ways. The music bounces, swoops, and skitters to a pizzicato beat before ending with a final humorous surprise. Lighthearted doesn't mean lightweight, though: Like all Françaix's works, the Trio à cordes is tightly and intricately constructed. As he once said, "I am always told that my works are easy. Whoever says that has probably not played them."

[note by Barbara Leish]

Ludwig van Beethoven

Serenade in D for String Trio, Op. 8

I. *Marcia. Allegro - Adagio*

II. *Menuetto. Allegretto*

III. *Adagio - Scherzo. Allegro molto - Adagio - Allegro molto - Adagio*

IV. *Allegretto alla Polacca*

V. *Thema con Variazioni: Andante quasi allegretto - Variationen I-IV - Marcia. Allegro*

During his early years in Vienna, Beethoven worked his way through genres in which Haydn and Mozart had set the standard: piano sonatas, piano and string trios, string quartets, symphonies. But he also wrote lighter works. One popular musical entertainment was the divertimento or serenade.

Beethoven's contribution to this genre was the Serenade for String Trio in D Major. It is a graceful and good-humored work, full of vitality; and while it looks back to the Classical 18th century rather than ahead to the revolutions to come, it is not without some adventurous touches.

The Serenade has six movements – seven, if you count the opening March and Adagio as two. It begins with a jaunty march that announces that the entertainment is about to begin. The violin takes the lead in the lyrical section that follows, a gentle and untroubled Adagio, charmingly melodious. Next comes the first of the dances, a Menuetto with a trio. This movement has some humorous surprises: brusque chords introduce it, and a playful pizzicato coda ends it.

Beethoven's sense of humor emerges in the next movement, too. The expressive but melancholy Adagio that begins the movement is interrupted by a short, mercurial scherzo, amusingly scored for the three instruments. This happens twice in the movement, so that by the time the Adagio makes its final reappearance, it's hard to take it entirely seriously.

Any lingering gloom is banished by the fourth-movement polonaise, an infectious dance that in Beethoven's hand radiates good cheer. Next, he turns to a form for which he already was well known, a theme with variations. He had written many sets of variations for the piano, most of them consisting of ornaments on a theme, and that is the pattern he follows here. All of the variations are gracious elaborations on a lovely melody, with each instrument getting its turn to take the lead. Finally, Beethoven repeats the opening March to bring his entertainment to its genial conclusion.

Despite Beethoven's reputation for being moody and pugnacious, he also could be "merry, mischievous, full of witticisms and jokes," as Czerny once described him. The lighthearted Serenade is a delightful reminder of that Beethoven.

[note by Barbara Leish]

Christopher's Classics Next Concert:

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On-Line Sales: www.eventfinda.co.nz (all charges to purchaser)

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Acknowledgements:

Elizabeth Ball Trust, The Piano, Gloria Streat and private donors
thank you all