

Christopher's Classics - Series XXVIII 2023

ngtrio



Somi Kim (piano), Ashley Brown (cello), Amalia Hall (violin)

Performing: Chen Yi, Enescu,
Victoria Kelly and Dvořák

Presented by
Sunday Classics Inc

Elizabeth Ball Trust



Thursday, August 31st, 2023, 7:30 PM
The Piano, 156 Armagh St, Christchurch

The busiest lives deserve beautiful music.

Programme

Chen Yi (b. 1953) - *Tunes from My Home*

George Enescu (1881-1955) - *Piano Trio in A minor*

Interval

Victoria Kelly (b. 1973) - *Lyre* (new NZTrio commission)

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904) - *Piano Trio No. 3 in F minor, Op. 65*



Described as a “national treasure” and “New Zealand’s most indispensable ensemble” (William Dart, NZ Herald), NZTrio is renowned for its eclectic repertoire, outstanding talent and warm kiwi presence. Any preconceptions of classical music being stuffy or intimidating are smashed by edgy repertoire, venue ambiance, and post-concert manaakitanga. Every NZTrio performance powerfully reaffirms the importance and cathartic nature of a live musical experience in today’s digital world.

Amalia Hall (violin)

Concertmaster of Orchestra Wellington, Amalia is a regular soloist for orchestras in NZ and abroad, and performs recitals and chamber music throughout Europe, USA, Asia, South Africa, Mexico and NZ. She plays on the "Baron Knoop" Vincenzo Rugeri violin from c. 1700, generously on loan from a private benefactor.

Ashley Brown (cello)

A founder of NZTrio, Ashley Brown is one of New Zealand’s leading collaborators, chamber musicians, soloists and recording artists. He is a passionate advocate for New Zealand music and has performed with Dame Gillian Whitehead, Moana Maniapoto, Michael Houstoun, and Neil Finn. He plays the 1762 William Forster ‘Liberte’ cello.

Somi Kim (piano)

South Korean born New Zealand pianist Somi Kim is one of today's most highly regarded young pianists with a string of competition successes and extensive concert experience. A Samling Artist and a Yeoman of the Worshipful Company of Musicians, Somi is an official pianist for the International Holland Music Sessions, Gisborne International Music Competition and the New Zealand Opera School.

A respected ambassador of new compositional works, NZTrio has championed over 75 new commissions to date (more than 2/3 from NZ composers) and showcases these around the country and overseas. They enthusiastically welcome collaborative opportunities, with many projects past and future spanning the arts spectrum of contemporary Pacific dance (Pacific Dance NZ, 2022-2025), contemporary dance (BalletCollective Aotearoa, 2021; New Zealand Dance Co., 2012/13), visual arts (Simon Ingram 2021/2022), taonga puoro (Horomona Horo 2019; Forest & Bird / PACT, 2022-2023), contemporary folk (Nadia Reid, 2022), alternative/indie (Finn Andrews, 2021-2023), animated film (David Downes, 2009), theatre (Massive Co., 2013), voice (Simon O'Neill, 2016/2023) as well as cross-cultural musical works with masters of Chinese guzheng and Cambodian traditional instruments. The group has also established two mentorship programmes that reach out to high school musicians and tertiary composers nationally as well as an ever-expanding catalogue of recorded work. Critical acclaim includes a Tui for Best Classical Artist at the 2017 Vodafone NZ Music Awards, two citation awards: the KBB Music/CANZ citation (2012) and the Lilburn Trust Citation (2017) – both for outstanding services to New Zealand Music.

Programme Notes

Chen Yi *Tunes from My Home*

Taught piano and then violin by her parents, doctors and gifted amateurs, Chen Yi and her siblings grew up in Guangzhou playing chamber music together and learning the western musical canon by heart. When Chairman Mao's Cultural Revolution intervened Chen Yi continued her musical studies in secret. Finally, the Cultural Revolution came to an end, the Central Conservatory reopened, and in 1978 she became the first Chinese woman to graduate with a Masters in Music. Chen Yi has been based in the USA ever since, garnering a variety of awards and distinctions including a Pulitzer nomination and induction into the American Academy of Arts and Letters (2019).

She wrote this trio for her fellow Chinese-American pianist Xun Pan, and says of the piece:

"Both Xun Pan and I are Cantonese in origin and it's natural for me to speak in my native tongue in our trio, to make him smile and feel 'home.' I got the inspiration from the folk Cantonese Music for my work. The pitch materials of my motives are drawn from Summer Thunder, Prancing Horses, and Racing the Dragon Boat. The first movement serves as the introduction of all pitch materials, the music is happy, energetic and celebrating, with a quiet middle section featuring harmonics and lyrical counterpoint in the strings as a contrast; the second movement, Nostalgia, is a fugue in delicate and sensitive expression; and the final movement, Happiness, in the textures of dialogues and smooth moving passages, is a celebration to happy occasions..."

George Enescu *Piano Trio in A minor* (1916)

- I. *Allegro moderato*
- II. *Allegretto con variazioni*
- III. *Vivace amabile*

Lost until 1965, this marvellous piano trio was performed only once and then lost again, emerging again only in the 1990s. Written during the First World War while Enescu chose to work at a military hospital as a nurse and at the same time worked tirelessly to keep the musical life of Romania going. He rushed from place to place conducting and performing, all with an unflagging energy, enthusiasm and humility that endeared him to everyone who ever met him.

He had always been extraordinary, a prodigy who wrote his first opus 'aged five and one quarter'. He was, everybody agreed, the greatest musical phenomenon since Mozart. He was also a quintessentially Romanian composer. Romanian folk music inflects all of Enescu's work, including this trio which sits exactly halfway between the folkloristic forms of his youth and the more esoteric, impressionist utterances of his maturity. Enescu's folk music, and the folk music of Eastern Europe, was dissonant, disruptive, heavily accented and dizzyingly complex, leading to exciting new possibilities. That is what informs the tour-de-force variations, the thrillingly virtuoso heart of this piece.

The other influence of this trio is undeniably French. Since he was 12 years old Enescu's other home was always in Paris, where he studied with Fauré and Massenet, encountered Impressionism and Indonesian gamelan. Later in his life he became excited by collaborations with Ravi Shankar. You hear this in the first movement, with its delicate wash of sound and subtle rhythmic shifts. Then the folk- inspired variations, always with perfect interplay between the instruments, and unabashedly romantic Fauré-like finale.

Victoria Kelly *Lyre* (New NZTrio commission)

Victoria Kelly is an award-winning composer, performer and producer, based in Aotearoa New Zealand. She works across a spectrum of musical genres including contemporary classical, film and popular music. Her work has been commissioned, performed and recorded by the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, the Auckland Philharmonia, NZTrio, the New Zealand String Quartet, Stroma, Michael Houstoun and Stephen de Pledge.

About this work Victoria writes:

"Once all the Faroe Islands were floating islands. They drifted unclaimed around in the fog until they found their permanent place." William Heinesen

My grandmother was born in the Faroe Islands – a tiny archipelago nestling in the North Atlantic ocean, 11,000 miles away from Aotearoa. The Faroes are astonishing in their beauty and strangeness. Their isolation is like a tone in the air. Fog appears and disappears around them, as if inhaled and exhaled by the surrounding sea. In Greek mythology, Sirens lured sailors towards islands. They're often depicted playing lyres – ancient stringed instruments also present in the folk traditions of Norway, Iceland and Ireland (all places with ancestral ties to the Faroes).

*In this piece I explore the lure of islands. I imagine the sea as a colossal Lyre, accompanying their voices across vast distances. The horizon is always in view, with yet more islands beyond sight. The piece quotes a traditional Faroese hymn – *Jeg Stod Mig Op En Morgenstund / I Got Up One Morning* – and incorporates elements of Scandinavian and Celtic folk music. It evokes the hypnotic rhythm of waves, the shapes of the Faroes, and the ways in which places (and the journeys between them) shape us.*

Lyre was commissioned by NZTrio with support from an anonymous patron, as a birthday gift for a man of the sea."

Antonín Dvořák *Piano Trio No. 3 in F minor, Op. 65*

- I. *Allegro ma non troppo – Poco piu mosso, quasi vivace*
- II. *Allegro grazioso – Meno mosso*
- III. *Poco adagio*
- IV. *Finale: Allegro con brio – Meno mosso – Vivace*

Antonín Dvořák was born in Bohemia (today's Czech Republic) as revolution swept across Europe and nationalism became a dominant feature in European art. His Third Piano Trio (1883) is probably the most dramatic of his four piano trios; symphonic in scope and elegiac in character, it is intensely expressive. Dvořák's mother had died the previous year and its emotional Slavic themes communicate an aching nostalgia contrasted with moments of brightness and even defiance.

The finely-shaped and serious opening theme is contrasted by an exquisite second theme on the cello. The mood shifts from nostalgia and despair to drama and brief triumph. The texture is almost orchestral, particularly with the piano, the dynamic range expansive, the gestures sweeping – but there are also gentle moments.

The scherzo second movement is a folk-type melody with the heavy accents and cross-rhythms of a Slavic furiant*, leading to a change of mood in its Brahmsian trio.

A melancholy cello melody opens the third movement, but lightens up when joined by a tender violin theme underpinned by the piano. It offers both nobility and sorrow.

The Finale is again in the rhythm of a furiant* and returns the Trio to its home key of F minor. There's a look back to the Trio's opening theme, a reminder of the slow movement, and then a dashing final flourish into F major to end this dramatic trio.

*Furiant: a rapid and fiery Bohemian dance with frequently shifting accents.

Yi and Enescu programme notes by Charlotte Wilson 2023

Dvořák programme notes by Joy Aberdein 2014

Christopher's Classics Next Concert:

Argyle Trio



performing **Beethoven, Smetana** and **Dvořák**

Thursday 14th September 2023, 7:30 PM

at **The Piano** 156 Armagh St.

Tickets: Door Sales: \$40 (students **\$15**) by cash
\$42 (students **\$17**) by credit card/EFTPOS.

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

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