

Christopher's Classics - Series XXVIII 2023

# Serenity, David & Sarah



Serenity Thurlow  
(viola)



David McGregor  
(clarinet)



Sarah Watkins  
(piano)

*Performing:* Mozart, Bruch, Clarke  
and Ewazen

Presented by  
Sunday Classics Inc

Elizabeth Ball Trust

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Thursday, July 27th, 2023, 7:30 PM  
**The Piano**, 156 Armagh St, Christchurch

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*The busiest lives deserve beautiful music.*

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# Programme

**W. A. Mozart (1756-1791)** - *Trio in E-flat Major, K. 498 "Kegelstatt"*

**Max Bruch (1838-1920)** - *Eight Pieces for clarinet, viola and piano*

*Interval*

**Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979)** - *Prelude, Allegro, and Pastorale for clarinet and viola*

**Eric Ewazen (b. 1954)** - *Trio for clarinet, viola and piano*

**Serenity Thurlow** (Ngāi Tahu, Waitaha, Kāti Māmoe, Ngati Porou, Te Whānau a Apanui) began playing the violin at age five with the Suzuki Method and the viola at fifteen. At the University of Canterbury she studied violin and viola with Jan Tawroszewicz and she was part of the inaugural Graduate Ensemble Programme at Victoria University, studying string quartet with the New Zealand String Quartet.

Serenity moved to Austria in 2006 to undertake further study at the Mozarteum in Salzburg. She completed her Masters there with Peter Langgartner and postgraduate studies with Thomas Riebl. She was a prizewinner in the Lionel Tertis viola competition in Salzburg. While in Austria she was an active chamber and orchestral musician, performing across Europe and the USA with orchestras such as the Salzburg Chamber Soloists, Camerata Salzburg, Deutsche Kammerakademie Neuss among numerous others.

In 2010 she returned to Christchurch to take up the position of Principal Viola in the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra. In 2012 she was Principal Viola of the Aldeburgh World Orchestra, part of the Britten-Pears Festival, which subsequently toured Europe. In 2016 she premiered Chris Cree Brown's Viola Concerto for the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra. She has been an active chamber musician in NZ, including touring NZ with the New Zealand String Quartet in 2021.

Serenity plays a Derazey viola, Malo bow and Leahy bow with the generous support of Christopher Marshall.

**David McGregor** has been Principal Clarinet of the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra since 2018. In this role he works across the Canterbury region as both an exciting performer and dedicated educator. He notably appeared as a soloist with the CSO performing Mozart's Clarinet Concerto in 2020.

With a decade of orchestral experience across New Zealand and Australia, David was selected as a Sydney Symphony Orchestra Fellow in 2017, which involved many performances with the orchestra as well as chamber music, education and outreach work around Sydney and greater NSW. He has also performed with various leading Australasian orchestras and ensembles, including the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Queensland Symphony Orchestra, and Southern Cross Soloists.

**Sarah Watkins** passion for accompanying and chamber music has led to an impressive and busy career as a collaborative pianist. As a founding member of NZTrio for 16 years, Sarah performed throughout Asia, the USA and Europe, and now enjoys a wide variety of collaborations with musicians throughout Aotearoa. In addition to regular engagements as a pianist for competitions and orchestras, Sarah is an award-winning recording artist. She was named Classical Artist of the Year with violist Robert Ashworth in 2022, and violinist Andrew Beer in 2020 at the Aotearoa Music Awards, for the CDs "Moonstone" and "11 Frames". In 2014 Sarah recorded Chris Watson's SOUNZ Contemporary Award-winning "sing songs self" for solo piano and orchestra with the NZSO. A graduate of the University of Canterbury (NZ), Sarah earned both MM and DMA degrees from the Juilliard School (NY). She is currently on the teaching staff at the University of Auckland.

# Programme Notes

## **Mozart Trio in E-flat Major, K. 498 “Kegelstatt”**

- I. *Andante*
- II. *Menuetto*
- III. *Rondeaux: Allegretto*

Mozart composed the Trio in E-flat Major for clarinet, viola, and piano on 5th August 1786, dedicating it to one of his piano students, Franziska von Jacquin . The nickname “Kegelstatt”, meaning “skittles” or “bowling alley”, seems to have been slightly misapplied to the trio, as only nine days earlier, Mozart had composed the 12 Duos for Two French Horns, of which the manuscript bears the inscription, “*Wienn den 27t Jullius 1786 untern Kegelscheiben*” (Vienna, 27 July 1786 while playing skittles).” Over the years, the nickname has transferred to the trio, and it has certainly stuck!

Mozart was a real pioneer of chamber music involving the clarinet. He was the first composer to write a major work for this combination of instruments. Robert Schumann was next with *Märchenerzählungen* composed in 1853, and Max Bruch in 1909 with *Eight Pieces for clarinet, viola and piano* - some of which will be performed this evening.

The first performance of the trio was given at the von Jacquin’s house with Franziska on the piano. Mozart himself played the viola, along with one of his best friends, clarinettist Anton Stadler. Mozart wrote many important works for the clarinet with Anton, most notably, the Quintet for clarinet and string quartet in 1789, and the Concerto for clarinet and orchestra in 1791, just a few weeks before Mozart’s death.

The trio consists of three movements, *Andante*, *Menuetto*, and *Rondeaux: Allegretto*. These tempi seem to break away from the more traditional “fast-slow-fast” structure, though rest assured, there’s plenty of excitement, playfulness and drama (especially in the viola) throughout the work!

## **Bruch Eight Pieces for clarinet, viola and piano**

- I. *Allegro agitato*
- II. *Rumänische Melodie: Andante*
- III. *Nachtgesang: Andante con moto*
- IV. *Allegro vivace, ma non troppo*

Bruch is commonly known today for his works for violin and orchestra, however his compositional output includes three operas, three symphonies, three violin concerti, a piano trio, and even a series of secular and sacred choral works.

It was Max Bruch’s son, Max Felix, a theory teacher and skilled clarinettist at the Hamburg Conservatory that prompted him to write two works that feature the clarinet (and viola!), namely *Eight Pieces (1909)*, and a *Double Concerto for Clarinet, Viola and Orchestra (1911)*. The *Eight Pieces* were first performed in Cologne in 1909.

Although *Eight Pieces* were originally written for clarinet, viola and piano, Bruch published alternative versions for violin, viola and piano; and clarinet, cello and piano. He conceived *Eight Pieces* as a collection rather than a cycle, and each piece was published separately allowing performers to select individual pieces and assemble as they wish. He apparently advised against playing all eight pieces in one programme! Each piece is written in a different key, with No. 7 being the only one in a major key.

# **Clarke Prelude, Allegro, and Pastorale for clarinet and viola**

- I. *Prelude*
- II. *Allegro*
- III. *Pastorale*

Clarke was visiting her brothers in the USA in 1939 for what was supposed to be a short trip but became stranded when World War 2 broke out. She was unable to obtain a visa to return to Britain because as a composer she was considered an “unproductive mouth”. She kept composing while also working as a governess and in 1942 the Prelude, Allegro, and Pastorale for clarinet and viola was one of 33 works accepted for the Festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music, the only one there written by a woman.

In her own words, written to the festival organisers, “the whole thing is very unpretentious: a short unassuming little prelude; an Allegro which I originally thought of calling a Toccata - as it gives both the players plenty of chance to show what they can do... The third movement Pastorale is rather melancholy and nostalgic...”

The work, only published after her death, shows her mastery of the distinctive sonorities of both instruments and her understanding of atmosphere and colour.

## **Ewazen Trio for clarinet, viola and piano**

- I. *Allegro Appassionato*
- II. *Andante teneramente*
- III. *Allegro molto*

Eric Ewazen is an important American composer who has served on the faculty of the Juilliard School in New York since 1980. He has produced music across all genres but is perhaps best known for his compositions featuring wind and brass instruments. His style is what one might call ‘neo-Romantic’ – highly lyrical, engaging, with a melodic facility likened to Prokofiev, but definitely in the spirit of Copland, Creston, and other iconic American composers.

The trio for clarinet, viola and piano was commissioned by Trio con Brio, the faculty ensemble at Texas Christian University, and was given its premiere in 2005 at NYC’s Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall.

Eric writes about the piece:

*One of the most famous trios for this combination of instruments is the great Mozart Kegelstatt Trio (K. 498). The beauty and playfulness of Mozart’s piece, and the elegant classical structure of the work became the inspiration for my Trio.*

*When I think of the clarinet and the viola, with somewhat similar ranges, I think of a rich color, sonorous and resonant. I emphasized this color with the two instruments often joining together in lyrical duets, or allowing the viola to play chordal harmony with double stops as the clarinet plays rising and cascading gestures throughout its range. The first movement, in true classical sonata form, is somewhat melancholy with the instruments exchanging solos, while the pianist provides a harmonic, churning accompaniment. The second movement treats the two solo instruments as genuine singers, again in a resonant duet, as the pianist continues to play sweet harmonies underneath, and the final movement is a classical rondo, using a lively main theme full of rhythmic energy and changing rhythms, which is actually a nod to my own heritage – Ukrainian/Polish, with those Eastern European dance rhythms and modal melodic gestures influencing the lively sound of this movement, which continues to swirl and grow ever more exciting until a grand, joyful finale.*

## Christopher's Classics Next Concert:

# nztrio



performing **Enescu, Chen Yi and Dvořák**

**Thursday 31st August 2023, 7:30 PM**

at **The Piano** 156 Armagh St.

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**\$42** (students **\$17**) by credit card/EFTPOS.

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