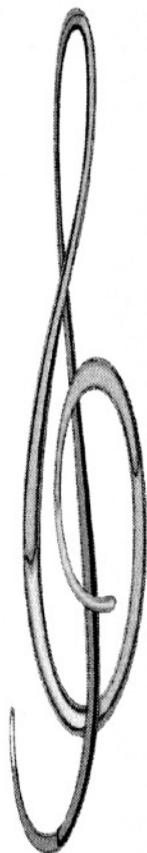


Christopher's Classics - Series XXVI 2021

presents

Te Koki Trio



Martin Riseley (violin), Jian Liu (piano), Inbal Megiddo (cello)

Performing: Bartók, Kodály and Brahms

Presented by
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Elizabeth Ball Trust

 THE PIANO
LIVE MUSIC FOR ALL

Thursday, May 6th, 2021, 7:30 PM

The Piano, 156 Armagh St, Christchurch

The busiest lives deserve beautiful music.

Programme:

Béla Bartók - *Violin Sonata No. 1, Sz.75*

Zoltán Kodály - *Duo for Cello and Violin, Op. 7*

Interval: 15 minutes

Johannes Brahms - *Trio in B major, Op. 8*

Béla Bartók (1881 - 1945) Violin Sonata No. 1, Sz.75

I. *Allegro appassionato*

II. *Adagio*

III. *Allegro*

The Hungarian nature of this programme, more suggested in the work represented here by Brahms by his fellowship with the great violinist Joseph Joachim, is clearly dominant from the outset in the bold compositions we are playing by Bartok and Kodaly.

This concert begins one hundred years ago, in 1921, with one of Bela Bartok's most challenging chamber music masterpieces - challenging not only for the audience but for the players as well. From the scurrying piano cascades of the opening, which seem of no fixed tonal center, to the frenetic abandon of the finale, this work owes its existence to the same violinist who inspired Ravel's Tzigane - Jenny d'Aranyi. As brilliant a player as she must have been, for this sonata remains one of the most difficult to perform of any sonata, for both musicians, it was still not until some years later that Bartok heard what he was looking for - he was left in tears upon hearing Yehudi Menuhin playing this work, telling him that usually composers were not played with such understanding until well after their death.

Though the form and exposition of this sonata are very complex, its main message is one of ardent and impassioned commitment to its discourse. In its simpler musings, the beautiful opening of the slow movement for example, it is also highly rigorous, created from manipulations of mirrored patterns and various other permutations, which are nonetheless rendered into an emotional narrative. It is this rigour that lends Bartok's music an enduring legacy from the simplest piano works he wrote for students, to the most experimental of his works such as this sonata.

Duration: 30'

Zoltán Kodály (1882 - 1967) Duo for Cello and Violin, Op. 7

- I. *Allegro serioso, non troppo*
- II. *Adagio - Andante*
- III. *Maestoso e largamente, ma non troppo lento - Presto*

Kodaly's Duo for Violin and Cello was written in 1914 but not published until 1922, the same year that Maurice Ravel's Duo for the same instruments was published. Quite why Kodaly chose this rare combination is documented in a letter to the Lener Ensemble from 1924:

"In the summer of 1914 I spent a few weeks in Switzerland in an excellent mental and physical disposition. The day of the declaration of war found me, together with my wife in Zermatt. The whole resort became empty in a few days, and we too had to bid farewell to the most monumental mountain sights, as the hotels were closing down. We had to make the last stretch to the Swiss border in a truck, since Switzerland too was mobilizing. We had to stay put for several days in a village along the Tyrolean border (Feldkirch). It was there the vision of the Duo suddenly appeared to me. Never before had I thought of scoring for a combination such as this. I thought no one ever had done so before either. (Later I became acquainted with Haydn's and I also read that it had been fairly frequent in the 18th century)."

The work was completed in Budapest, where Kodaly spent the war, having been declared unfit for military service. The composer certainly knew of Brahms' Double Concerto for these instruments, however, his earlier cello sonata op. 4 even quoting it, but the writing in the Duo is highly individual.

One can hear the urgency in both of these works to declare the Hungarian origin of its creators - this is summed up in an essay Bartok wrote in 1922:

"Until the beginning of the last century Hungary had no composer in the true sense of the word, just as it had no real music culture similar to that of other nations of Europe. The reasons for this lack must be looked for first of all in the geographic situation-an Oriental one-and secondly in the unfavourable political events. Indeed, hardly had Hungary freed herself from the Turkish yoke when she fell under the Austrian one and suffered all its sad consequences. Turkish rule, which lasted for about two centuries, left nothing behind but desolation and devastation; Austria made the country into a colony. The imperial government was concerned only with economic exploitation and Germanization of the Hungarian country; circumstances that often enough provoked bloody reactions. And under such unfavourable conditions, evidently, the arts at least could not improve...musical culture was on such a level at that time that Liszt was compelled from childhood on to finish his musical education abroad. It was just those years he spent outside Hungary that were the most productive of his entire life."

Duration: 20'

Johannes Brahms (1833 - 1897) Trio in B major, Op. 8

- I. *Allegro con brio — Tranquillo — In tempo ma sempre sostenuto*
- II. *Scherzo: Allegro molto — Meno allegro — Tempo primo*
- III. *Adagio*
- IV. *Finale: Allegro*

This trio by Brahms is one of three that he published, but the version we are to hear tonight is not the first one that he wrote. Written at the age of twenty, in 1854, he substantially revised it in 1889, and this is the version that we most often hear in concert. There is no doubt that this latter version is superior in every way, and it is a grand example of symphonic concert music that is not written for the orchestra, but is nevertheless on that scale of conception. Most of Brahms' chamber music masterpieces follow this ideal, as do the chamber works of his friend, Antonin Dvorak, and any one of them could be adapted for full orchestra and still succeed in the concert hall. It's a wonder more PhD students haven't taken up this challenge, but there is a famous example by Arnold Schoenberg, an arrangement of Brahms' first piano quartet that is extremely successful.

The opening *Allegro con brio*, despite the brisk marking of tempo, is glowing in its lyricism, but also early on displays bursts of temper and unease, which are quickly calmed through more of the lyrical mood that prevails. The second movement, *Scherzo*, is light and full of displaced accents which mark the jocose nature of Beethoven's scherzos. The trio section however is back to the glorious unhurried lyricism of the first movement.

These two brilliant movements are followed by an *Adagio* in the radiant key of B major. It's opening is introspective and questioning, moving us into the minor key for an ardent and yearning second subject. The narrative Brahms takes us through with these contrasts of moods is handled so eloquently and clearly that, even though this music has no words, we are hearing a story unfold, though time seems to stand still. This movement is the heart of the work, and dictates the direction of the following *Finale*, which, though fast and energetic, retains that thoughtfulness and introspection, even as it propels us along to its conclusion.

Duration: 35'

Te Koki Trio

Te Koki Trio comprises three full-time members of the staff from New Zealand School of Music – **Martin Riseley** (violin), **Inbal Megiddo** (cello) and **Jian Liu** (piano) – all of whom have extensive careers as professional musicians both nationally and internationally. Between 2011 and 2020, they have performed in all New Zealand's main centres, including Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin, etc., as well as Australia, Singapore, China and Kuala Lumpur, with further national and international performances planned for 2021. The Trio toured with violist Jennifer Strumm under Chamber Music New Zealand in 2019.

Internationally celebrated concert pianist, chamber musician, and educator, **Dr. Jian Liu**, has performed and taught throughout Europe, Asia, and North America. His artistry has been taking him to some of the most prestigious concert halls, including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and Steinway Hall in New York, Sprague Hall and Woolsey Hall of Yale University, and Paul Hall of Julliard School, and as a featured soloist with orchestras including Symphony Orchestra of National Philharmonic Society of Ukraine, China National Symphony Orchestra, Phoenix Symphony Orchestra, Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, Orchestra Wellington, Christchurch Symphony Orchestra, and Yale Philharmonia, among others.

Jian has also been a prize-winner at Horowitz (Ukraine) and Missouri Southern (USA) international competitions and has performed at Auckland (New Zealand), Idyllwild (USA), Beijing (China), Lausanne (Switzerland), and Krakow (Poland) music festivals. He was an adjudicator for several international music competitions, and his performances have been broadcast by various TV and radio stations including KPHO public radio, CCTV (China), Suisse Romande Radio, Krakow Radio, and Radio New Zealand.

As a passionate performer, Jian is equally committed to education. Jian has served for four years on the faculty of the Yale Department of Music, and he is currently the Programme Director of Classical Performance and Head of Piano Studies at New Zealand School of Music at Victoria University of Wellington. His students are prize winners at international competitions such as the Zhuhai International Mozart Competition for Young Musicians (China) and Indonesia Pusaka piano competition (Indonesia). He has also taught master classes and lectures at the Central Conservatory of Music (China), Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance (Israel), Rutgers University and Manhattan School of Music (USA), Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music (Singapore), Krakow Academy of Music (Poland) and Sydney Conservatorium, among others. Jian studied with Professor Jin Zhang from Central Conservatory in Beijing and Dr. Caio Pagano at Arizona State University. He holds Master of Music, Doctor and Master of Musical Arts degrees from Yale School of Music, where he was a student and assistant of Professor Claude Frank.

New Zealand violinist **Martin Riseley** studied at Juilliard with Dorothy DeLay, where he completed Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts Degrees. He subsequently became Concertmaster of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra for fifteen years, where he performed and premiered a number of concertos. He has played chamber music with some of the leading musicians of our time, including Pinchas Zukerman, Yo Yo Ma and John Kimura Parker, and has held other concertmaster positions, including Interim Associate Concertmaster of the National Arts Center Orchestra, under music director Pinchas Zukerman.

He has also made the first CD recordings of some important chamber works of Douglas Lilburn and recorded 'Meditations on Michelangelo' by Jack Body with the NZSO and Ken Young, as violin soloist. This recording won a Vodafone New Zealand Music Award for Best Classical CD in 2015. In 2015 he was also appointed Concertmaster of the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra.

Cellist **Inbal Megiddo** has performed as soloist with many of the great orchestras and in major concert halls around the world, including recitals at the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, and the Staatsoper in Berlin, and concerto performances with the Berlin Symphony at the Philharmonie. Maestro Zubin Mehta describes her as "an extremely talented, very musical musician." At her New York debut at the Lincoln Center her playing was hailed by the press as having "magical expression and technical expertise." She has a "warm lustrous communicative way... the performance was sincerity personified!"

Recent recorded releases include a recording of the complete Bach Cello Suites and Debussy's Sonatas and Trio for Atoll and Naxos, which were nominated for Best Classical Album at the NZ Music Awards, and a recording of Beethoven's complete works for cello and piano for Rattle Records released to critical acclaim. Ms. Megiddo gave the NZ premieres of the Weinberg, Villa Lobos, and Barber Cello Concertos, with her playing described as "Superb!...Virtuosic, brilliant and powerful!" Radio and television appearances include performances on WQXR, NPR (US), Kol Hamuzika (Israel), RNZ, and German radio and television. Other recent highlights include solo performances with the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, Bournemouth Symphony, Ukraine Philharmonic, Lithuanian Philharmonic, and Israel Chamber Orchestra, collaborations with preeminent conductors including Daniel Barenboim, Shlomo Mintz, and Lior Shambadal, and concert tours throughout Europe, North America, and Asia. An advocate of new music, she has collaborated with, premiered, and recorded the works of several leading composers, among them Jan Radzynski's Cello Concerto in New York, and works by Laurence Sherr, Lori Laitman, Ross Harris, Michael Williams, and John Psathas.

Inbal Megiddo began her cello studies at the age of two, and gave her first performances a year later. She holds graduate and undergraduate degrees from Yale University where she studied with renowned cellist, Aldo Parisot. An avid chamber musician, Ms. Megiddo is a founding member of the Te Koki Trio, and has collaborated with musicians including Erick Friedman, Jesse Levin, Ben Verdery, Peter Oundjian, Boris Berman, Peter Frankl, Claude Frank, Jennifer Stumm, and the Tokyo String Quartet.

In high demand as a teacher, Ms. Megiddo is Senior Lecturer in Cello at the New Zealand School of Music. She has held faculty positions at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and Yale University, and has been guest artist at festivals including the International Cello Congress in Japan and Israel, Beijing International Chamber Music Festival and Melbourne Cello Festival. She has given masterclasses at institutions around the world, including many of the major music schools in North America, Europe, Israel, and Australasia and is founder and director of the Cellophonia International Festival in Wellington.

Ms. Megiddo performs on a Fiorini cello, and was awarded use of a Stradivarius cello on loan by the Stradivari Society.

Christopher's Classics Next Concert:

Lixin Zhang

performing **Chopin, Mozart** and **Liszt**

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