IVES
COLLECTIVE

2017-2018 SEASON

Fall Collective

Bohemian Rhapsodies

Friday, October 13, 2017, 8PM
Old First Church, San Francisco
Sunday, October 15, 2017, 3PM
First Congregational Church, Palo Alto

Josef Suk
Piano Quartet in A minor, Op.1
Antonín Dvořák
Terzetto in C Major for Two Violins and Viola, Op. 74
Antonín Dvořák
Piano Quartet No. 2 in E-flat Major, Op. 87

Robin Sutherland, piano
Roy Malan, violin
Nancy Ellis, viola
Susan Freier, violin/viola
Stephen Harrison, cello




IVES COLLECTIVE
Ray Malan, violin; Susan Freier, violin/viola
Nancy Ellis, viola; Stephen Harrison, cello
Robin Sutherland, piano

Bohemian Rhapsodies

Piano Quartet in A minor, Op.1 (1891) — **Josef Suk (1874-1935)**

Allegro appassionato
Adagio
Allegro con fuoco

Terzetto in C Major for Two Violins and Viola, Op.74 (1887) — **Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)**

Introduzione: Allegro ma non troppo
Larghetto
Scherzo: Vivace
Tema con Variazioni

Intermission

Piano Quartet No. 2 in E-flat Major, Op. 87 (1889) — **Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)**

Allegro con fuoco
Lento
Allegro moderato, grazioso
Finale: Allegro ma non troppo

This performance is sponsored in part by a grant from The Ross McKee Foundation.

Piano Quartet in A minor, Op. 1 **Josef Suk**

Josef Suk entered the Prague Conservatory as a violinist at the age of eleven, later adding composition courses to his program. Suk's final year of study coincided with the arrival of Antonín Dvořák as a composition professor at the conservatory. Suk became Dvořák's favorite pupil, and, eventually, his son-in-law. Some of Suk's early works, like the String Serenade, clearly took Dvořák as a model, while his masterpiece, the *Asrael Symphony,* was written as a memorial to Dvořák in 1905.

Dvořák, perhaps as a consequence of having recently composed the piano quartet that will close today's program, suggested that Suk also write a piano quartet. The resulting Piano Quartet in A minor was the first of Suk's works to be written entirely under Dvořák's supervision. Both composers were pleased with the work, and Suk was allowed to use it as his graduation piece in 1891. Despite the close contact with Dvořák, the seventeen-year-old Suk already shows himself to have an individual voice in this piece. In particular, the harmonic language and tight motivic work show him to be familiar with (and attracted to) the music of composers younger and more progressive than his mentor. The first movement is based on two apparently different themes, the first a vigorous idea in the minor mode boldly stated by the strings in octaves, and the second a warm melody in the major given to the cello. The two themes are very close in melodic shape, and Suk gradually transforms the first into the second to make the connection clear. Dvořák was especially pleased with the slow movement, and for obvious reasons. An expansive melody for the cello (which, perhaps, betrays a fondness for Gounod's *Ave Maria*) is passed to the violin, with some yearning comments from the cello. The middle section is more animated, and becomes quite impassioned before the return of the opening melody. The piano, which had been relegated to the role of accompanist for most of the previous movement, leaps to the fore at the beginning of the final movement. This finale, like the first movement, makes frequent use of dotted-note figures. A long pedal point (later to become a Suk trademark) leads to a triumphant conclusion.

After leaving the conservatory, Suk began to concertize as second violinist of the newly formed Bohemian Quartet, which would become one of the most internationally successful quartets of its time. Inevitably, Suk's heavy performance schedule reduced his compositional activities, and, although he continued to compose until the end of his life, he is best known for his earlier works. Today, his most famous product may be his grandson, the violin virtuoso of the same name.

Terzetto in C Major for Two Violins and Viola, Op. 74 **Antonín Dvořák**

By 1887, Dvořák's compositions were widely performed, and the composer was financially secure. However, while he had revised some youthful works, Dvořák had composed no new string chamber music since the C major quartet of 1881. That work was composed for a professional quartet, the Hellmesberger Quartet, as was Dvořák's previous string quartet, the 1879 E-flat quartet, written at the request of the Florentine Quartet. Despite the demand for Dvořák's works from ensembles that were amongst the earliest and most important of standing professional string quartets in Europe, his return to chamber music in 1887 was prompted by an amateur.

The Terzetto for two violins and viola was composed in a single week, and intended as domestic *Hausmusik*, to be played by Dvořák himself as violist, with Josef Kruis, a young chemistry student who rented a room in Dvořák's building, and his violin teacher, Jan Pelikán, who had played with Dvořák in the Provisional Theater orchestra. The first movement, although labeled as an introduction, is a self-sufficient movement that combines a lyrical and wistful theme with busy, almost neo-Baroque passage-work. A brief linking passage leads directly to the slow movement. Each violin gets a turn with the sweet and gentle melody before a more aggressive middle section marked by dotted rhythms. The movement ends with a return of the opening material, decorated with flowing scales. The third movement is the rhythm of a Czech dance, the furiant, which alternates beats grouped in twos (1-2/1-2/1-2) with beats grouped in threes (1-2-3/1-2-3). This distinctive rhythm also figures prominently in Dvořák's Slavonic Dances. Again, each violin takes a turn playing the main theme in double stops (Dvořák carefully allows the chemistry student second violinist to stay in first position). The finale is a somewhat cryptic theme and variations, in which the theme sounds like an introduction, and in which the beginnings of the subsequent variations are not obvious.

Despite Dvořák's hopes that the Terzetto would be played in his home, he overestimated young Kruis's abilities, and the piece was first performed by professionals at a Prague music society concert. Dvořák atoned by composing an easier work for Kruis and Pelikán (the Miniatures, Op. 75a). Dvořák in no way felt that composing for amateurs involved lowering his standards. As he wrote to his publisher, Fritz Simrock, "my work brings me as much pleasure as if I were writing a major symphony…[the Miniatures] are, of course, aimed at amateur musicians, but didn't Beethoven and Schumann also once write little pieces, and look what they came up with!"

Simrock was particularly happy to publish these short works for string trio from Dvořák, since the biggest market for sheet music was in accessible pieces appropriate for domestic settings. In fact, the question of what kinds of works Dvořák should concentrate on had been a contentious one for some time, with Simrock constantly reminding Dvořák that large symphonic works were not financially viable propositions, and nagging him to provide more short piano pieces, songs and chamber music. Perhaps surprisingly, a new piano quartet was near the top of Simrock's wish list. In July of 1888, he wrote "I would always be happy with a piano quartet from you. You promised me one some time ago. How do things stand with it?" Simrock returned to the subject twice in December, suggesting that two piano quartets would be even better than one. Perhaps significantly, in Simrock's last letter of 1888, he also complained that Dvořák's works were not selling in Vienna (and were faring poorly in Austria in general) on account of nationalist tensions, and discourages Dvořák from describing his work as "Slavic."

When Dvořák did finally provide Simrock with a piano quartet in 1889, he had crafted a work that would appeal to audiences in public performances by professional musicians, while also taking into account the amateur performers who were most likely to purchase the sheet music. He also had to balance the likelihood that overtly Czech elements would be poorly received in Vienna with the success of "exotic" works like the Slavonic Dances outside of Austria. Despite Dvořák's long-standing reputation as a sort of uncomplicated man of the countryside, he was a highly sophisticated and clever manipulator of musical styles to suit his ends, and the E-flat major piano quartet is an excellent example of his ability to speak to multiple audiences at the same time.

The piano quartet opens with a distinctive and declamatory motive, stated by all three stringed instruments without accompaniment. This is the sort of gesture that would immediate communicate to a concert audience, and be easily recognized when returning in various guises later in the movement. The more attentive audience member might notice that the fourth note of the motive sounds out of place, perhaps even wrong, and hear it as a sort of problem to be addressed. Indeed, the climax of the movement is a grand statement of the opening motive in the piano, with the fourth note "corrected" to a more conventional pitch. Meanwhile, the amateur performer, looking at the music, would realize that the "wrong" note – B natural – is a clue that keys that include that pitch will be important (the second theme occurs in both G major and B major).

Similarly, the slow movement is attractive by virtue of its concentration on the presentation of melodies, to the near-total exclusion of development or connective

material, and by the strong contrasts of character between sections, while also playing the kinds of subtle harmonic games alluded to above. The third movement is the one that probably would have been most appealing and accessible, both to audiences and to domestic players. The main theme, a kind of graceful waltz, is juxtaposed with an exotic melody over a drone in the manner of a Chopin mazurka, and then repeated with the piano imitating a cimbalom (or perhaps a music box?). The finale is a vigorous movement that can't decide what key it is in, wavering between minor and major and different tonics before finally arriving safely home.

Like Dvořák himself, both the Terzetto and the E-flat major piano quartet quickly made it to the New World, and, unlike the composer, traveled all the way to the Bay Area. In 1894, Dvořák received a letter from the violinist Sigmund Beel (born in Oakland, studied in Berlin with Joseph Joachim) containing a program for the first performance of the piano quartet in San Francisco. The quartet was "received with the greatest enthusiasm," at Beel's concert society, which had also performed the "beautiful Terzetto for strings."

– Notes by Dr. Derek Katz

Roy Malan, violin, serves as solo violinist with the California Symphony and as and Opera Parallèle, and was the long-time concertmaster and solo violinist for the San Francisco Ballet. The founding director of the Telluride Chamber Music Festival, he has an extensive career of performance domestically as well as in Canada, Mexico, Europe, Australia, and Africa to his credit. He is also widely recorded on the Genesis, Orion, and other labels, Roy was formerly a member of Porter Quartet, Stanford String Quartet, Ives Quartet, and the San Francisco Piano Trio, among others.

Educated at London's Royal Academy of Music under Yehudi Menuhin, he also attended Juilliard and the Curtis Institute, where he was a student of Ivan Galamian and Efrem Zimbalist (he authored the latter's biography). Roy currently serves on the faculty of the University of California, Santa Cruz, plays locally with a string quartet, piano trio, and music festival engagements. He has been a member of SFCMP since 1976.

Nancy Ellis received her training at the Interlochen Arts Academy, Oberlin College and Mills College, where she studied with Nathan Rubin. Ms. Ellis has been a member of the San Francisco Symphony since 1975, and has also performed with the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players and as a chamber music player with Music from Marlboro, as well as part of a quartet in support of rock singer Van Morrison.

Susan Freier, violin and viola, earned degrees in Music and Biology from Stanford University as a Ford scholar and continued her studies at the Eastman School of Music where she formed the Chester String Quartet. In 1989, Susan joined Stanford's faculty and the Stanford String Quartet.

A former artist-faculty member at the Pacific Music Festival, Music in the Mountains, the Rocky Ridge Music Center, and the Orfeo Music Festival (Italy) Susan teaches and performs at the Mendocino Music Festival, the SoCal Chamber Music Workshop and the Telluride Chamber Music Festival.

Stephen Harrison, cellist has been on the Stanford University faculty since 1983. A graduate of Oberlin College and Boston University, he has been solo cellist of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players since 1985.

Stephen has been on the faculty of the Pacific Music Festival, the Orfeo and Schlern International Music Festivals (Italy) and the Rocky Ridge Music Center. He is currently principal cellist at the Mendocino Music Festival, and performs and teaches at the SoCal Chamber Music Workshop and the Telluride Chamber Music Festival.

Robin Sutherland, pianist, studied at the Juilliard School and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. While still an undergraduate, he was appointed principal pianist of the San Francisco Symphony by conductor Seiji Ozawa. The recipient of numerous awards, Sutherland was selected at 17 to be sole participant from the USA at the International Bach Festival, held at Lincoln Center. He was a finalist in the International Bach Competition in Washington DC and has performed all of J.S. Bach's keyboard works. An avid chamber musician, Robin Sutherland is co-director of the Telluride Chamber Music Festival and a regular performer at the Bay Chamber Concerts in Rockport, Maine. Many composers have dedicated works to him, and among the world premieres in which he has participated was that of John Adams's Grand Pianola Music. A frequent soloist with the SFS, Robin Sutherland has been featured in Leonard Bernstein's Age of Anxiety with Michael Tilson Thomas conducting. In 1996, his recording of Bach's Goldberg Variations was released on the d'Note label.

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