

WOMEN'S
WORK
SEASON 2



IVES
COLLECTIVE

Winter
Collective



Friday, January 26, 2024

7:30PM

St. Mark's Church, Palo Alto

Sunday, January 28, 2024

4:00PM

Old First Concerts, San Francisco

Stephen Harrison, cello
Susan Freier, violin
Elizabeth Schumann, piano
Kay Stern, violin



Mélanie Bonis
Soir and Matin (1907)

Dame Ethel Smyth
String Trio in D Major (1887)

Mélanie Bonis
Piano Quartet No.1 in B-flat Major, Op.69 (1905)

Please save these dates!

2023-2024 Concert Series

SPRING COLLECTIVE

Friday, May 5, 2024

St. Mark's Church, Palo Alto

Sunday, May 7, 2024

Old First Concerts, San Francisco

Germaine Tailleferre – *Quatuor* (1919)

Emilie Mayer – Piano Quartet No.1 in G Major (1857)

Mozart – String Quintet in C Major, K.515 (1787)

Artists: Fritz Gearhart, violin; Susan Freier, violin/viola; Clio Tilton, viola
Evan Buttemer, viola; Stephen Harrison, cello; Gwendolyn Mok, piano



4 PM Sunday Salon Series

April 28, 2024

Social Hall - St. Mark's Episcopal Church

600 Colorado Ave, Palo Alto, CA

Emilie Mayer - Piano Quartet in G Major

Salon Concerts

Along with guest moderator, U.C. Santa Barbara musicologist Derek Katz, we discuss and demonstrate what fascinates us about a chosen piece, taking us deeper into the creative process. We particularly enjoy the exchange of ideas with patrons about the composer's intentions and our interpretation of the music. This season Salon concerts will be offered in the Social Hall at St. Mark's Church, Palo Alto, in order to allow for socially distanced seating.

All programs, artists and policies of the Ives Collective are subject to change without notice.



IVES COLLECTIVE

Kay Stern, violin; Susan Freier, violin/viola
Stephen Harrison, cello; Elizabeth Schumann, piano

Soir and Matin for Piano Trio, Op.76 (1907)

Mélanie Bonis

(1858-1937)

Andante cantabile
Andantino

String Trio in D Major, Op.6 (1887)

Dame Ethel Smyth

(1858-1944)

Allegro
Allegretto grazioso
Adagio (non troppo)
Allegro molto

Intermission

Piano Quartet No.1 in B-flat Major, Op.69 (1905)

Mélanie Bonis

(1858-1937)

Moderato
Intermezzo. Allegretto tranquillo
Andante
Final. Allegro ma non troppo

Mélanie Bonis and Ethel Smyth

Mélanie Bonis and Ethel Smyth were both born in 1858. Both of them found a passion for music on their own, and, despite lack of support from their families, both took advantage of the spread of conservatories across Europe in the 19th century. Both had their musical educations disrupted by romantic intrigue, and presented their works under names that hid their gender, with Bonis publishing her compositions as "Mel Bonis," and Smyth initially presenting herself in England as "E.M. Smyth." These similarities between the two women's careers, however, are superficial in comparison to the differences between them, reflecting both their own personal circumstances and different opportunities and attitudes in different parts of Europe.

Bonis, from a lower-middle class and strictly Catholic family, taught herself to be a proficient keyboard improviser before finally receiving music lessons at twelve. At sixteen, she began piano lessons with César Franck, who both encouraged her as a composer and brought her to the Paris Conservatoire. Unlike other conservatories in Europe at the time, the Paris Conservatoire was a state-supported institution that prepared students for the most prestigious of musical careers (most of which were largely closed to women). The Conservatoire also admitted only a very small number of foreign students, training French musicians for careers in France. Like her fellow student Claude Debussy, Bonis received not only a thorough and rigorous musical education, but also a distinctly French musical orientation. She had a personal compositional voice, but her works come from the same sound world as those of Conservatoire notables like Franck and Gabriel Fauré. Bonis was forced out of the Paris Conservatoire by her parents after falling in love with a fellow student. She was married off to an older man, and largely put her musical career on hold while raising her step-children and children, returning to composition in earnest in the later 1890s.

Smyth, the daughter of a British Major General, was of a more privileged social stratum than Bonis. She showed no early inclination towards music beyond the piano and singing lessons then customary for girls, but became proficient in the activities of her class, including tennis, riding and hunting. Just as Bonis was beginning music lessons, the twelve-year-old Smyth had her own conversion experience, hearing a new governess play a Beethoven piano sonata. This not only inspired her to become a composer, but specifically to attend the Leipzig Conservatory, where the governess had studied. Smyth's other life-changing experience was attending a London performance of Brahms's *Liebeslieder Waltzes* in her late teens. As she later wrote, "his genius possessed me," and this further aligned her with German musical traditions. Smyth did, in fact, move to Leipzig to attend the Conservatory, but was disappointed on her arrival to find an institution that had lost the luster of its early years and fellow students that seemed mostly interested in meeting the

requirements for teaching certificates. The student population was very different from that of Bonis's Paris Conservatoire. Over half of Smyth's 1877 entering class in Leipzig was female, and almost 40% were foreign (including 22 Americans and 17 from the British Isles). Despite being quickly accepted into the composition class of Carl Reinecke, Smyth left the Conservatory, and stayed in Leipzig to become the informal student of the composer Heinrich von Herzogenberg. Smyth became part of the Herzogenberg household, becoming especially close to Herzogenberg's wife Elisabeth, a very fine musician and former pupil and close friend of Brahms. The Herzogenbergs immersed Smyth in Bach's music (Heinrich was the director of the Leipzig Bach Society) and brought her into contact with musical figures who came through Leipzig, including Brahms himself, Tchaikovsky and Grieg. These *de facto* student years ended when Smyth became involved in a love triangle with Elisabeth's sister and brother-in-law. Smyth had significant early successes in Leipzig, with chamber works performed at the Gewandhaus, but her real fame would come after her return to England, especially as an opera composer, with multiple operas produced across Europe and even at New York's Metropolitan Opera (*Der Wald*, 1903; the first opera by a woman composer to be staged there, and the last until 2016). In addition to her many musical accomplishments, Smyth was also a prominent part of the Women's Suffrage movement.

***Soir and Matin* for Piano Trio, Op. 76
Piano Quartet No. 1 in B-flat Major, Op. 69**

Mélanie Bonis

Both of the pieces for piano and strings by Mélanie Bonis on this program come from the most productive and musically active period of her career, extended roughly from the beginning of the 20th century until the First World War. During this time she published many compositions, especially works for piano and chamber music with piano, performed as a pianist, and was elected an officer of France's Society of Composers.

Soir and Matin (Evening, Morning), as signaled by the titles, suggest two contrasting moods. The Evening initially seems to be a serene one, although a new, lightly syncopated theme and an ardent return of the opening material imply that there might be some human feelings implicated in the end of this day. The Morning is a very quiet and bustling one, filled with activity, but never rising above a murmur.

The Piano Quartet No. 1 was premiered in Bonis's own salon, with the composer at the piano and future San Francisco Symphony conductor Pierre Monteux playing the viola part. Camille Saint-Saëns is supposed to have remarked after the performance, "I would never have thought that a woman could write like that. She knows all the tricks of the trade." This may seem like a backhanded compliment, but the Quartet made such an impression on Saint-Saëns that he could play the themes

from memory many years later.

The first movement is notionally in sonata form, but is more of a continuously melodic fantasia, with little distinction between presentation, transition and development. The main idea is first stated by the viola alone, with two dramatic drops, each followed by a winding path back upwards. The violin introduces a second idea, falling slowly through two octaves, over rustling sixteenth notes in the viola. The second theme proper (appearing in the remote key of B Major) is the most lyrical, played first by the violin and then answered by the cello over smooth and even lines from the piano. The second movement, rather than a lively *scherzo*, is a more moderate *Intermezzo*, with a charming, swaying theme that alternates with contrasting episodes. It returns with subtle enhancements, first running passage work from the viola, and offbeat piano chords and cello *pizzicati* at the end of the movement. The slow movement starts off in a much more serious mood, moving to minor mode and presenting a lamenting melody over low piano chords (the Quartet is labeled as being in B-flat Major, but the entire second half of the piece is centered on G minor). The melody quickly shifts to major mode, however, signaling that this will be a movement of rapidly shifting emotions. A second theme, presented by the cello, again wavers between major and minor. Both themes are combined in a middle section before the opening melody returns at full strength with the string players in octaves. The final movement also begins in a serious minor mode, with an assertive theme with the strings again in powerful octaves. The conclusion of the movement is preceded by a striking passage in whole tones that reminds us that Bonis and Debussy were schoolmates. The Quartet is a hidden gem of the piano and strings repertoire that would repay much more frequent performances.

String Trio in D Major, Op. 6

Dame Ethel Smyth

We don't know exactly when Smyth composed her String Trio, but it existed by 1887, when it was part of a small group of pieces rejected for performance by the violinist and Brahms associate Joseph Joachim. Annotations on the manuscript score by both Herzogenbergs suggest that the piece was composed and revised during Smyth's early years in Leipzig. Smyth doesn't mention the work in her autobiographies, and there is no record that it was performed during her lifetime, nor was it published then. Nearly all of Smyth's chamber music was composed during her time in Leipzig, reflecting both the priorities of Brahms's circle and also Smyth's hopes to compose works that could be published and performed. She was probably also encouraged to compose string chamber music as compositional exercises by Herzogenberg, who himself had just composed two fine (and under-appreciated) string trios when Smyth arrived in Leipzig. Smyth's Trio is not as overtly Brahmsian as some of her other early chamber music (or as Herzogenberg's own music), but

it does show her orientation towards his style and conservative German music in general (as opposed to Liszt and Wagner).

If the Trio was intended as a compositional exercise for Herzogenberg, the first movement is an excellent demonstration of Smyth's facility with form and with motivic development. The movement is in a classical sonata form (complete with an exposition repeat) with themes that lend themselves to being broken down into smaller motives that can be manipulated and combined. The second movement is a moderate-tempo *scherzo*. The outer sections are marked by syncopated accompaniments, and the interior trio is more dance-like, mostly over drones in the cello. The main theme of the slow movement is a stately melody in the manner of a hymn, accompanied by repeated eighth notes from the viola. Smyth quickly breaks this mood with a contrasting section in which both melody and accompaniment are more hesitant. The *finale* starts off with a rollicking figure that sounds as if it could come from Scottish folk music (again, over a drone in the cello) before shifting to a more impassioned theme in the minor mode that evokes Brahms more than the Highlands.

– Notes by Dr. Derek Katz



Susan Freier, violin/viola, and co-Artistic Director of the Ives Collective, 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 co-founded the award-winning Chester String Quartet. The Chester went on to win the Munich, Portsmouth (UK) and Discovery Competitions and was the quartet-in-residence at Indiana University, South Bend.

In 1989 Susan returned to her native Bay Area and joined the Stanford faculty and the Stanford String Quartet. She performs with the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players and has been an artist/faculty member at the Newport Music Festival, Garth Newell Music in the Mountains, Rocky Ridge Music Center, and the Schlern and Orfeo Music Festivals (Italy). Susan teaches and performs at the Mendocino Music Festival and the SoCal Music Workshop.



Stephen Harrison, cello, and Co-Artistic Director of the Ives Collective 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. He has toured internationally and recorded on the Delos, CRI, New Albion and Newport Classics labels. 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.



Kay Stern is currently the Concertmaster of the San Francisco Opera Orchestra, a position she has held since 1994. She has served as assistant to Dorothy DeLay at the Aspen Music Festival, assistant to the Juilliard Quartet at the Juilliard School, has been a faculty member at the Cleveland Institute of Music, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and the University of San Francisco.

Kay has been featured on television and radio. She has appeared in PBS's "Live from Lincoln Center," CNN's "Women Today," Minnesota Public Radio's Garrison Keillor "A Prairie Home Companion," "St. Paul Sunday Morning," and WQXR-NY Robert Sherman's "Listening Room". As former first violinist and founding member of the Lark String Quartet, she performed and gave master classes throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia. Some of Kay's Concertmaster positions have included The Orchestra of St. Luke's, Concordia at Lincoln Center, Cabrillo Music Festival, Cleveland Chamber Symphony, and the Youngstown Symphony Orchestra.



Pianist **Elizabeth Schumann** has a diverse career portfolio of projects, recordings, and performances that have brought her all over the world as recitalist, chamber musician, and concerto soloist. The Washington Post Magazine noted her playing as "deft, relentless, and devastatingly good—the sort of performance you experience not so much with your ears as your solar plexus."

The first place winner of both the Bösendorfer International Piano Competition and the Pacific International Piano Competition, Elizabeth has won over 25 prizes and awards in other major national and international competitions, including the Cleveland International Piano Competition and the Hilton Head International Piano Competition. Elizabeth was honored with the prestigious Gilmore Young Artists Award, and was highlighted in a PBS Television documentary on the Gilmore Festival.

She has performed solo recitals and chamber music concerts worldwide, in such venues as the Kennedy Center, Vienna's Bösendorfer Saal, Toronto's Koerner Hall, and Montreal's Place des Arts. Featured at the International UNICEF benefit concert for Hurricane Katrina Victims, the Cannes Film Festival, the Gilmore Festival, Australia's Huntington Festival, the Musica Viva chamber music series, the Ravinia "Rising Stars" Series, and National Public Radio's "Performance Today", her recitals have been broadcast live on public radio and television in cities around the world, including Washington D.C., New York, Sydney, Cleveland, Montréal, Dallas, and Chicago. Elizabeth gave the world premiere performance of Carl Vine's Sonata No. 3, which the composer dedicated to her.

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The Ives Collective presents powerful live music experiences through fresh and informed interpretations of established masterworks and under-appreciated gems.

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We are so pleased to welcome you back!

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