



'Where the biggies leave off...'

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Isles Ensemble musicians bring 'classic' chamber music to Hill and Lake neighborhood on Sunday, February 18

By Michael Wilson

The musicians of the Isles Ensemble return to the heart of our four Hill and Lake neighborhoods on Sunday afternoon, February 18, at 2 pm with a program at Lake of the Isles Lutheran Church featuring three "classics": Haydn's "Gypsy" Piano Trio No. 39; Mozart's Duo for Violin and Viola No.1, K.423; and Brahms' Piano Quartet No. 3, Op. 60.

The opportunity to play two classics by Haydn and Mozart, coupled with word that a few Esterházy and the Archbishop of Salzburg might be in town to attend the concert, has inspired the musicians to accoutre themselves in classical fashion to make our noble visitors right at home. The Isles Ensemble musicians know how to party like it's 1790!

Haydn was probably the most celebrated composer in Europe when composed his set of three piano trios in 1795. He had left the employ of the Esterházy four years earlier and was at the end of the second of his two enormously successful two-year stays in London. Shortly after he first arrived a wealthy widow, Rebecca Schroeter, wrote to ask Haydn if he might stop by and give her a music lesson. Their friendship deepened, and Haydn dedicated all three piano trios to her.

The trio we'll hear on Sunday, HOB XV/25, is perhaps Haydn's most well-known piano trio. Cellist Laura Sewell will be joined by Leslie Shank (violin) and Ivan Konev (piano).

"I am very much looking forward to playing the exuberant Haydn "Gypsy Rondo" trio on February 18th!" says Sewell. "I have played the piece many times and it never gets old. Like all of Haydn's great masterpieces, it is full of originality, elegance, and humor. Haydn, who was known as something of a prankster during his lifetime, really shows his true colors in this piece. The trio gets its nickname from the Hungarian gypsy melody that is used throughout the final movement. It is one of those rare classical pieces where we players can really let go and kick up our heels! It is a true show-stopper!!!"

Mozart and the Haydn brothers.

Leslie Shank returns to play the afternoon's second piece, Mozart's Duo for Violin and Viola No. 1, K. 423. Mozart and Haydn were great friends and admirers of each other's work. Mozart was thus happy to rescue Haydn's younger Michael from the sure displeasure of the notoriously prickly Prince-Archbishop Colloredo of



Photo creation: Sifei Cheng. Caption: Michael Wilson.

Isles Ensemble musicians David Leung (violin), Leslie Shank (violin), Ivan Konev (piano), Tom Rosenberg (cello), Sifei Cheng (viola), and Laura Sewell (cello) don classic attire for their Sunday, February 28 concert featuring two of the Classical period's greatest composers, Haydn and Mozart, plus a beautiful Brahms piano quartet.

Salzburg — the nobleman-prelate who famously dismissed Mozart with the words, "Let him go then, I don't need him." But let's let Shank tell the story.

"I am looking forward to playing Mozart's G Major duo, the first of two that Mozart wrote, with violist Sifei Cheng," Shank says. "It is a delightful piece with equal difficulty for both violin and viola. Mozart wrote the two duos as a favor to his friend, Michael Haydn, who had accepted a commission from his former employer, and Mozart's, the Archbishop of Salzburg, to write six duos for that combination. Michael fell ill after having written only four, so Mozart, who had great respect for Michael Haydn, stepped in and wrote these two duos. Of course, it is easy to see that Mozart was the composer, not Haydn!"

Sunday's concert concludes with Brahms' Piano Quartet No. 3 in C minor, Op. 60. Tom Rosenberg (cello) is joined by Sifei Cheng (viola), David Leung (violin), and Ivan Konev (piano).

"The C minor Quartet for Piano and Strings by Brahms is an awesome piece that has it all," says Rosenberg. "The piece starts out dark, troubled and stormy, has a ravishingly warm and beautiful slow movement, an exciting and nervous scherzo, and a lyrical yet tragic and fateful finale that makes extensive use of Beethoven's famous 4-note theme from the C minor 5th Symphony. Brahms originally wrote this piece during a troubled and emotionally trying time while his friend Schumann was in failing mental health, but he put it aside and did not finish it until some twenty years later. If you don't know this piece (and even if you do) you don't want to miss it!"

The Isles Ensemble musicians suggest a donation of \$20 (\$15 for seniors and \$10 for students). Concerts are always followed by a reception with refreshments.

Go to the group's website (<islesensemble.org>) to learn more about the musicians' impressive backgrounds and current activities.