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Hrabba Atladottir, violin; Susan Freier, violin

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Keisuke Nakagoshi, piano

Sunday, March 12, 2023 at 4 PM

Old First Church

1751 Sacramento St. at Van Ness Ave.

San Francisco, CA 94109

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Old First Concerts' piano is a New York Steinway D model, circa 1980, with Hamburg action. It was donated by The Stanley Ibler Fund, and is maintained by David Love Piano Service and Restoration.

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Keisuke Nakagoshi began his piano studies at the age of ten, arriving in the United States from Japan at the age of 18. Mr. Nakagoshi earned his Bachelors degree in Composition and Masters degree in Chamber Music from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Graduating as the recipient of multiple top awards, Keisuke was selected to represent the SFCM for the Kennedy Center's Conservatory Project, a program featuring the most promising young musicians from major conservatories across the United States. Mr. Nakagoshi has performed to acclaim on prestigious concert stages across the United States, including the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, the Hollywood Bowl, and Davies Symphony Hall in San Francisco. He has received training from some of the most celebrated musicians of our time – Emanuel Ax, Gilbert Kalish, Menahem Pressler, Robert Mann, Paul Hersh, David Zinman – and enjoys collaborating with other accomplished musicians such as Lucy Shelton, Ian Swensen, Jodi Levitz, Robin Sutherland, Lev Polyakin, Axel Strauss, Mark Kosower, Gary Schocker and also conductors such as Alasdair Neale, George Daugherty, Nicole Paiement, Michael Tilson Thomas and Herbert Blomstedt. Mr. Nakagoshi is Pianist-in-Residence at The San Francisco Conservatory of Music and the award-winning Opera Parallele. He resides in San Francisco.

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PROGRAM

Grażyna Bacewicz (1909–1969)

Trio for Oboe, Violin and Cello (1936)

Adagio

Andante

Vivo

Amy Beach (1887–1944)

Theme and Variations for Flute and String Quartet, Op. 80 (1916, rev. 1920)

Theme: Lento di molto, sempre espressivo

Variation 1: L'istresso tempo

Variation 2: Allegro giusto

Variation 3: Andantino con morbidezza (quasi valzer lento)

Variation 4: Presto leggiero

Variation 5: Largo di molto con grand 'espressione

Variation 6: Allegro giocoso

INTERMISSION

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)

Piano Quintet in A major, Op. 81 (1887)

Allegro ma non tanto

Dumka: Andante con molto

Scherzo (Furiant): Molto vivace

Finale: Allegro

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Grażyna Bacewicz *Trio for Oboe, Violin and Cello*

Grażyna Bacewicz was a violin soloist of international stature and a highly accomplished pianist as well as a prolific composer. Not surprisingly, she concentrated on works that feature the violin, including violin concertos and sonatas, string quartets and other string chamber music. Bacewicz's initial conservatory training was in Warsaw, but she was one of many young Polish composers encouraged by Karol Szymanowski (then rector of the Warsaw Academy of Music) to study in Paris. Her studies with Nadia

Boulanger were supported by a scholarship from Ignacy Paderewski. After international tours as a soloist and teaching in Poland, she returned to Paris to study violin with Carl Flesch.

The *Trio for Oboe, Violin and Cello* was begun during this second stint in Paris, and composed for the oboist Seweryn Snieckowski (Bacewicz also composed an oboe sonata for Snieckowski). Later in her career, Bacewicz became impatient with the designation “neoclassical,” but in broad terms the trio does align with the light, formally clear works fashionable in Paris between the wars. The first movement opens with improvisatory oboe flourishes over open strings from the violin and cello. The main section is lively, with neo-Baroque passagework shared equally between the three players. A contrasting theme features the oboe over plucked strings. When the lively passagework returns, it is now upside-down. The middle movement alternates two textures. The first has a gently swaying melody over a constant alternation of two pitches (first low on the violin, then in the oboe). The contrasting section is sprightly, with a jaunty tune over plucked open strings. Throughout the movement, Bacewicz cleverly uses double stops and combinations of bowed and plucked notes to give the impression of a larger ensemble. The final movement returns to neo-Baroque figuration, now in more of a march character, with a syncopated melody in the oboe.

Amy Beach *Theme & Variations for Flute & String Quartet, Op. 80*
Amy Beach was a New Englander born and bred, spending most of her life in New Hampshire and Massachusetts, but her *Theme and Variations for Flute and String Quartet* is a San Francisco piece. Beach spent most of 1915 and 1916 in California, hearing her works performed at festivals in Los Angeles, San Diego and San Francisco, with the last two in celebration of the opening of the Panama Canal. Beach was based in San Francisco, where she had family, and was happy enough there to purchase a house and to plan to settle permanently (in any event, she moved back to New Hampshire in 1916). One of her major performances in California was an appearance with the Chamber Music Society of San Francisco, playing the piano part of her *Piano Quintet* (performed

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.

Tod Brody is principal flutist with SFCMP, as well as local new music groups Earplay, Eco Ensemble, and the Empyrean Ensemble, with an extensive career that has included performances of numerous world premieres and many recordings. He is also principal flutist of the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, the Sacramento Opera, and the California Musical Theater, and makes frequent appearances with the San Francisco Opera and San Francisco Ballet orchestras, and in other chamber and orchestral settings throughout the region. Active as an instructor, Tod teaches flute and chamber music at the University of California, Davis. In addition to performing and teaching, Tod is an active arts administrator, currently serving as Executive Director of the Marin Symphony. Tod joined SFCMP in 1997.

For more than 20 years, **Kyle Bruckmann** has asserted an otherwise unparalleled role for the oboe within the realms of Free Improvisation and Creative Music. He is also a dedicated interpreter of Western classical repertoire, active in solo, chamber, and orchestral settings, with a particular commitment to contemporary composition. Bruckmann is a member of performing ensembles including sfSound, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, Quinteto Latino, Splinter Reeds, Eco Ensemble, Opera Parallèle, and the Stockton Symphony. He is also active in many collaborative settings, as bandleader and sideman and in ad hoc free improvisational groupings. He has premiered dozens of works as a soloist and within these ensembles. Some of the composers with whom he has worked most directly and intensively include Olivia Block, Linda Bouchard, Chris Brown, Christopher Burns, Eoin Callery, Gabriela Lena Frank, José-Luis Hurtado, Maija Hynninen, Matt Ingalls, Christopher Wendell Jones, Michelle Lou, Sky Macklay, and Paula Matthusen,

Century Chamber Orchestra, The Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, The Empyrean Ensemble, The ECO ensemble and the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players to name a few.

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 were 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.

Freelance violist **Clio Tilton** delights in the diversity and excitement in her career. Seeking to share her gifts through both teaching and performing, she can be heard around the Bay Area in a wide range of groups: early music ensembles, symphony orchestras, and chamber groups. Clio performs with the San Francisco Symphony, the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, the San Francisco Contemporary Players, Oakland Symphony, Berkeley Symphony, the American Bach Soloists, as well as other regional orchestras. Sought-after as a chamber musician, Clio has performed with the Friction Quartet, Classical Revolution, Candlelight Concerts, and is a founding member of the Chamber Music Society of San Francisco. She has recorded for Time Warner with the Camerata de Lausanne, and has also been heard in recordings with Shajarian, Geographer, and Meklit.

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

by the Ives Collective last September). One marker of the concert's success was a commission from Elias Hecht, flutist and leader of the Society, for a new work. The resulting piece, the *Theme and Variations for Flute and String Quartet*, stands beside the *Piano Quintet* as Beach's most substantial and significant chamber works.

The theme is taken from a part song by Beach for four women's voices, *An Indian Lullaby*, Op. 57, No. 3. Despite the title, and despite Beach's close contacts with American composers who were actively engaged with Native American music, there is nothing Native American about the *Theme and Variations* beyond some generalized musical exoticism. The song's anonymous text is not Native American, and the music of the *Theme and Variations* is all Beach's. The theme, presented by the string quartet, has the gentle lilt appropriate for a lullaby, and its wistful minor opening turns to a more consoling major near its end. Some plucked open fifths from the cello are one marker of exoticism, with another provided by the entrance of the flute, which plays an improvisatory solo passage leading into the first variation. The flute itself could be associated with a Native American instrument, or more generally with music from outside of the concert hall (the flute entrance is distantly related to the opening of Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*), and the prominent augmented seconds had long been a staple of musical orientalism.

The variations start off as a series of attractive character pieces, with the melody of the theme remaining prominent. The first variation remains in the tempo and character of the theme, with the addition of the flute. A quicker variation bending the tune into duple meter is followed by a gentle and nostalgic variation with a waltz feel and a rapid, scherzo-like variation with the flute presenting the theme over light, detached notes from the strings. All of this is charming, but the fifth variation raises the emotional stakes. This slow and expressive variation, beginning with a singing solo from the cello that passionately rises into its upper register, constitutes about a third of the piece, and uses a language of great dynamic contrast and harmonic subtlety. Each instrument gets a turn to lead, and all urged to sing and be expressive. This

could easily be an independent slow movement. This is followed by reminiscences of the scherzo variation and of the initial flute entrance as transitions to a final variation that is animated and fugal. A truncated return of the theme brings the piece to a close.

Antonín Dvořák *Piano Quintet No. 2 in A major, Op. 81*

The juxtaposition of Amy Beach and Antonín Dvořák is a somewhat provocative one. In 1892, shortly after arriving in America, Dvořák gave an interview to *The Boston Post* in which he asserted that while women could play nicely, they didn't have the creative power to be composers. Beach published a response, extensively documenting the accomplishments of female composers through the centuries, as well as promoting current and upcoming events featuring women. A year later, Beach again pushed back against Dvořák, this time writing a letter to the editor of *The Boston Herald*, questioning Dvořák's public pronouncement that American composers should use African-American melodies as a way of making their music distinctively national. Beach contended that African-Americans were no more native than European immigrants, and that Northerners like herself were unlikely to be familiar with these melodies. Beach's 1896 *Symphony in E minor*, which makes use of Gaelic folk music, was a direct response to Dvořák's *New World Symphony*, with its evocations of African-American spirituals.

Dvořák's *Piano Quintet, Op. 81* was composed before his time in America, and is an excellent example of his ability to suggest national color without actually using any folk materials. By 1887, Dvořák's fame had made it financially viable to publish his early works. Amongst the works that he considered revising for publication was a very early *Piano Quintet in A major*. Dvořák apparently was sufficiently dissatisfied with this quintet to compose an entirely new work in the same key. The resulting work is one of his most popular, and is exceedingly tuneful and colorful, even by Dvořák's standards. The *Piano Quintet* is largely devoted to the full presentation of characterful melodies, rather than their development. The luscious main theme of the first movement, for instance, is given a leisurely presentation by the cello, then shortly

returns in a partial statement from the piano, and another full version from the first violin, high up on the E-string. Satisfyingly large chunks of this melody also feature in the following development section, where we might otherwise expect it to be broken down into motives. The second movement *Dumka* alternates slow, minor laments with lively, dance-like sections. Dvořák used this musical idea for a number of slow movements, as well as using a whole series of dumky in his final piano trio. A *duma* (*dumka* is the diminutive) is a kind of Ukrainian lament, but there doesn't seem to be any connection between Dvořák's *dumky* and any folk precedents. More importantly, both the mournful and vigorous sections sound as if they *ought* to be derived from folk culture. Similarly, the scherzo is subtitled "furiant." This a Czech dance (albeit one that urban, middle-class Czechs would have known as a social dance, not as a folk dance), but the quintet movement does not have the distinctive rhythmic patterns that typify the dance. No matter; it's an attractive and vigorous dance. The middle section is exceptionally based on a slower version of the primary theme, rather than presenting wholly new material. The finale is again lively, blending the world of Dvořák's *Slavonic Dances* with a chamber music style. There is a wonderfully poignant moment near the end when the first violin presents the main theme very softly and slowly, over a hymn-like accompaniment. ~ Notes by Dr. Derek Katz

ABOUT THE MUSICIANS

Hrabba Atladottir is an Icelandic violinist who studied in Berlin with Professor Axel Gerhardt. After finishing her studies, she worked as a freelancing violinist in Berlin for five years, regularly playing with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Deutsche Opera, and Deutsche Symphonieorchester. Hrabba also participated in a world tour with the Icelandic pop artist Björk, and a Germany tour with violinist Nigel Kennedy. In 2004, Hrabba moved to New York, where she played on a regular basis with the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, Orchestra of St. Luke's and New Jersey Symphony Orchestra among other orchestras. Since August 2008, Hrabba has been based in Berkeley, where she has been performing as a soloist as well as with various ensembles, such as The New