

**Upcoming Events of the Seventy-Fifth Season of The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin Concerts**

Edvinas Minkstimas, piano  
"Washingtonians on Wednesdays"  
Music by Joplin, Dett, Gershwin, and Liszt  
February 8, 12:10  
West Building, East Garden Court

Eya  
*Florence: The Cultural Crucible*  
Presented in honor of  
*Della Robbia: Sculpting with Color in Renaissance Florence*  
February 11, 12:00 and 2:00  
West Building, West Garden Court

Blue Heron  
*Music of Du Fay for Florence and the Medici*  
Presented in honor of  
*Della Robbia: Sculpting with Color in Renaissance Florence*  
February 12, 12:00 and 2:00  
West Building, West Garden Court

Atlantic Reed Consort  
"Washingtonians on Wednesdays"  
*American Roots: Branches from Beginning*  
February 15, 12:10  
West Building Lecture Hall

A Far Cry with Roomful of Teeth  
*Music in Common Time*  
Music by Ted Hearne, Prokofiev, and Caroline Shaw  
February 19, 3:30  
West Building, West Garden Court

**General Information**

Admission to the National Gallery of Art and all of its programs is free of charge, except as noted.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that all portable electronic devices are turned off.

Concerts are made possible in part through the generosity of donors to the National Gallery of Art through The Circle. Reserved seating is available in recognition of their support. Please contact the development office at (202) 842-6450 or [circle@nga.gov](mailto:circle@nga.gov) for more information.

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**Cover** Benjamin Thompson, *Harpsichord Recital at Count Rumford's, Concord, New Hampshire* (detail), c. 1800, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch

# 75TH SEASON OF CONCERTS

FEBRUARY 5, 2017 • NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART



# PROGRAM

## 12:00 • West Building, East Garden Court

### Mendelssohn Piano Trio

Peter Sirotin, violin

Fiona Thompson, cello

Ya-Ting Chang, piano

*Complete Piano Trios of Franz Schubert (1797–1828)*

*Notturmo for Piano, Violin, and Cello in E-flat Major, op. 148, D. 897*

*Piano Trio in B-flat Major, op. 99, D. 898*

Allegro moderato

Andante un poco mosso

Scherzo: Allegro; Trio

Rondo: Allegro vivace; Presto

## 3:00 • West Building, East Garden Court

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

*Piano Trio in E-flat Major, op. 100, D. 929*

Allegro

Andante con moto

Scherzo: Allegro moderato; Trio

Allegro moderato

## The Musicians

### Mendelssohn Piano Trio

Since its founding by husband and wife Peter Sirotin and Ya-Ting Chang in 1997, the Mendelssohn Piano Trio has performed more than five hundred concerts in Asia, Europe, and the United States. The group also has made fifteen recordings, including most recently the *Complete Piano Trios of Haydn*, released on Centaur Records. The Mendelssohn Piano Trio's extensive repertoire of more than one hundred works embraces music from all periods of the genre's history. The *Washington Post* described the trio's Brahms as "unfathomably beautiful" and "electrifying," while praising their Tchaikovsky as "technically immaculate" and "rich in psychological insight." Each ensemble member is also a superb soloist, having enjoyed musical careers that transcend international boundaries and range from solo appearances with various orchestras to chamber music collaborations. The Mendelssohn Piano Trio performances and recordings can be heard on many classical radio stations, including NPR's *Performance Today*.

### Peter Sirotin

Violinist Peter Sirotin has performed hundreds of concerts as a chamber musician, soloist, and concertmaster in Europe, North America, and Asia since his debut at the age of fourteen, performing Paganini's Concerto no. 1, with the Kharkiv Philharmonic in his native Ukraine. After graduating with honors from Moscow's Central Music School, Sirotin became the youngest member of the Moscow Soloists chamber ensemble. With this group he has toured extensively, performing in major music centers, including the Royal Albert Hall in London, Pleyel Hall in Paris, Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, and Beethoven Hall in Bonn. Sirotin studied at the Moscow Conservatory and at the Peabody Institute, where he received a full scholarship for graduate performance diplomas in violin performance and in chamber music. His teachers included Earl Carlyss, Victor Danchenko, Berl Senofsky, and Adolf Leschinsky.

Sirotin's performances have been described by critics as "stylistically refined," "electrifying," and "brilliant." Together with his wife Ya-Ting Chang, he has recently appeared as a soloist in the world premiere of Ching-Ju Shih's Double Concerto for Violin, Piano, and Orchestra at the National Concert Hall in Taipei, Taiwan. Peter Sirotin is artistic director of Market Square Concerts and concertmaster of the Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra.

### Fiona Thompson

As cellist of the Mendelssohn Piano Trio, Fiona Thompson has become known for what one *Washington Post* critic has described as her “eloquent,” “radiant,” and “unfailingly handsome” sound. She began her cello studies at the age of seven in her native England, and has performed across the United States, Europe, and Asia. In addition to the Mendelssohn Piano Trio, Thompson’s chamber music experience includes performances with the Melos Ensemble, the Cygnus Chamber Ensemble, and the Razumovsky Quartet; she also has played with a number of prominent chamber musicians.

Thompson graduated with honors from the Royal Northern in 1994 and went on to attend the University of Southern California Thornton School of Music on a full scholarship. As a soloist, Thompson has performed with the Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra, the Westwood Chamber Orchestra, and the Bakersfield Symphony. As an orchestral musician, she has played with the Baltimore Symphony, the Kennedy Center Opera House, and the Metropolitan Orchestras. She is principal cellist with the Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra, where she has been a member since 1998. Thompson plays on a cello made by Paolo Testore, circa 1750.

### Ya-Ting Chang

Taiwanese-American Ya-Ting Chang is executive director of the Market Square Concerts in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and a member of the piano faculty at Messiah College in Grantham, Pennsylvania. Chang came to the United States in 1988. She studied with Enrique Graf and Ann Schein. She has performed extensively throughout the United States, Germany, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. For three years she participated in the Collaborative Artist Program at the Aspen Summer Festival and performed in the International Piccolo Spoleto Music Festival in Charleston, South Carolina. Chang appeared as a soloist with the Messiah College Orchestra, the Gettysburg Chamber Orchestra, the Shippensburg University Festival Orchestra, and the Hong Kong Chamber Orchestra. She has given master classes and served as an adjudicator in competitions. She is also an active chamber musician who enjoys making music with performers outside of her piano trio. She has collaborated with many instrumentalists including renowned cellist, Ronald Leonard, with whom she recently recorded cello sonatas by Grieg and Dohnányi, released by Centaur Records in February 2014.

### Program Notes

To explain Franz Schubert is to explain a miracle, and we should attempt it only with the reminder that he said of himself: “It sometimes seems to me as if I did not belong to this world at all.” Indeed, he belonged to it so briefly that the size and impact of his output are astonishing. Within his short lifespan of thirty-one years, he composed no less than nine symphonies, twenty string quartets, a variety of other significant chamber works, such as the famous “Trout” Quintet and Cello Quintet, numerous operas, twenty-one piano sonatas, as well as other solo piano works, including the *Wanderer Fantasy*, two glorious sets of impromptus, the remarkable F-Minor Fantasy for four hands, and the three inspiring works for piano trio that we hear today, bravely taken on by the Mendelssohn Piano Trio. Beyond this significant repertoire is Schubert’s vast catalogue of more than six hundred songs, a form of which he is the undisputed master, not only in the volume of his output, but more important, in the artful — and artless — way in which he matched words and music.

The impact of Schubert’s work is no less astonishing than its size. Although he received little recognition within his lifetime, his works represent a profound development in music history. Schubert managed to culminate a period of music and forge another. Within the strictures of classical form, he explored the romantic spirit in a way foreign even to Beethoven.

Son of a struggling schoolmaster, Schubert was born in Lichenthal, a Vienna suburb. At the age of nine, he was sent to study with the local church organist Michael Holzer, who was astonished at the young boy’s knowledge and understanding of music. At seventeen, he completed his first opera and a setting of Goethe’s poem, *Gretchen at the Spinning Wheel*, his first masterpiece. He left Vienna and his father’s school in 1818 to take up the position of music tutor to the daughters of Count Johann Esterházy, but returned the following year to his circle of Vienna friends. Several productive years followed, but by 1823 he was suffering from the syphilis that was rampant in Vienna. He served as a torchbearer at Beethoven’s funeral in 1827, but was dead himself the following year. In 1888, the bodies of Beethoven and Schubert were exhumed and placed side by side in Vienna’s Zentralfriedhof, where they remain today. Schubert’s epitaph, written by his friend Franz Grillparzer reads, “Here lie rich treasure and still fairer hopes.” In the emotional breadth of his music, we are transported into the better world he longed for.

Despite illness, depression, and persistent financial troubles, the last five years of Schubert’s life were remarkably productive and included the song cycles *Die Schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*, the Symphony no. 9, the last three piano sonatas, the great Quintet in C Major, and the three works we hear on today’s programs.

### **Notturmo for Piano, Violin, and Cello in E-flat Major, op. 148, D. 897**

The question remains why this work stands on its own since it was thought to have been the second movement of Schubert's great B-flat Piano Trio, op. 99, D. 898, of 1827. Schubert's reasons for removing it are a matter of speculation, yet everything about the work suggests a certain wholeness that might have intruded on a larger work. Then, too, the elaborate piano part pushes the limits of piano trio form so far beyond its earlier concepts that Schubert may have known that he had something special on his hands and so decided to keep it that way.

The work is a masterpiece of both classicism and romanticism. There is no end to its melodic inventiveness and emotional expression especially in the piano part, which is unabashedly elaborate and even florid at times. Scholars have suggested that the piece was inspired by a German folk song, "Lied der Rammfahlarbeiter" (Song of the Foundation Workers), which Schubert may have heard in 1825 shortly before the composition of his two great piano trios of 1827. Underneath the surface of song, however, counterpoint reigns, again driven by the piano. Governing all is a distinct heroism without pomp, a kind of romantic heroism that challenges even Beethoven.

The *Notturmo* was published some eighteen years after Schubert's death. The title was assigned by the publisher, Anton Diabelli. Schubert himself had written the word "Adagio" on the score. *Notturmo* or *Adagio*, the work stands alone as a jewel in Schubert's crown.

### **Piano Trio in B-flat Major, op. 99, D. 898**

Written probably within a year of his death, the B-flat Piano Trio marks a period of enormous creative output, despite Schubert's steadily declining health. There is some question of whether or not the B-flat Trio was performed at the March 26, 1828, concert of Schubert's music, the only public performance of his works during his lifetime. When it was published in 1836, Robert Schumann said of it in his *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, "A glance at Schubert's trio and all miserable human commotion vanishes, and the world shines in a new splendor."

The first movement is a noble march much decorated by the piano's restatement of the main theme in quiet octaves. The violin quavers gently above, and the cello underscores the march rhythm in a steady but subtle pizzicato. The cello introduces the second theme in a beautiful song over a typical Schubertian flowing piano accompaniment. After the development of that theme, Schubert startles us with three "wrong note" returns before the piano brings back the opening theme in the "right" key of B-flat major.

The second movement is another beautiful song, this one unmatched in its expressiveness. Again the cello sings out over a piano accompaniment. The violin and piano each restate the theme with countermelodies offered by the other instruments, a fine example of Schubert's ability to create what seems to be an endless melody generating within a continuously evolving structure. While Beethoven and Brahms also did this in their building of musical ideas from one kernel, Schubert employed the device so naturally in his music that we hear it there only in terms of emotional effectiveness. Beneath the expressiveness of the movement lies perfect classical sonata form.

The third movement, Scherzo, is Schubert at his most playful. A wonderful Trio section interrupts the movement and offers us, without apologies, a charming Viennese waltz.

The last movement, Rondo, is an elaborate development of a theme similar to the one of Schubert's 1815 song, "Skolie." The opening lines of that song, "Let us in the bright May morning take delight in the brief life of the flower, before its fragrance disappears," perhaps explain the dark underpinnings of the work.

Again to quote Schumann about the B-flat Trio: "Let the work, which he bequeathed to us, be a precious legacy! Time, though producing much that is beautiful, will not soon produce another Schubert!"

### **Piano Trio in E-flat Major, op. 100, D. 929**

Written in Schubert's final year, the opus 100 Trio was published and performed in 1828 and sold for sixty gulden to H. A. Probst of Leipzig, with careful instructions from Schubert on how it should be played. In a second letter replying to Probst's request for opus number and dedication, Schubert responded: "The opus number of the trio is 100. . . . This work is to be dedicated to nobody, save those who find pleasure in it. That is the most profitable dedication."

Robert Schumann said later of the E-flat Trio: "Some years ago a Trio by Schubert passed across the face of the musical world like some angry comet in the sky." Indeed, there is a certain anger about the E-flat Trio rooted in its powerful effectiveness. The anger, however, is never without Schubert's gift for song.

Schubert calls us to order in the first movement with its strong opening statement. He keeps our attention with the chromatic scales of the daring piano part. It is nothing new for a piano trio to have a dominant piano part, but in the case of this Trio, and particularly this movement, Schubert makes it clear that each instrument will share the glory. We are offered, therefore, extended sections where the strings sing over piano ornamentation.

The opening of the second movement suggests a funeral march with a solemn cello solo over a pulsing piano accompaniment. Piano and cello exchange that role before it is given to the violin. The mood intensifies as the march grows in power before a return to the theme of the opening statement. There is an added sense of song before Schubert draws a final breath to the movement.

The mood lightens in the third movement, Scherzo, in spite of its continuing dramatic shifts to the minor and surprising octave leaps. We march forward in a Schubertian waltz before the movement whisks away.

Schubert is almost happy in the heavily accented tramp of the *Allegro moderato*, filled with themes borrowed from the earlier movements, including another lovely moment for the cello. Chromatic descents add to the final power of the movement which, like the others, smacks of a march—but one into uncharted territory.

*Program notes by Lucy Miller Murray*