

MUSIC *by* THREE

Romantic Repertoire *for* violin, horn and piano

Jennifer Frautschi, violin
Eric Ruske, horn
Stephen Prutsman, piano

Johannes Brahms | Trio in E-flat Major, Op. 40
Théodore Dubois | Trio Cantabile
Josef Holbrooke | Trio in D, Op. 28

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The last few decades have provided us with a wealth of repertoire (a cornucopia, if you will) for the chamber music ensemble that combines violin, horn and piano. While still not a standard on the concert stage, composers have recently begun to exploit the seemingly disparate voices from these three diverse musical families. Contemporary luminaries such as John Harbison, György Ligeti, Poul Ruders, George Tsontakis, and Charles Wourinen have composed technically complex and musically satisfying horn trios. What inspired these composers to write for this particular group of instruments? Searching the music of Bach, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, one encounters a complete absence of works for this combination, and yet each of these prolific masters made considerable and outstanding contributions to chamber music of almost all other configurations. The *Trio in E-flat Major, Op. 40* by Johannes Brahms reigns as one of the supreme works of chamber music that include the horn, and it is often thought of as the model for all of the succeeding works composed for this trio. The instrumentation of this trio is certainly unique, as there were no precedents of note in the major chamber music oeuvre. In the years immediately following the completion of Brahms'

trio, many composers realized that this variation of the traditional piano trio (substituting horn for the standard 'cello) had myriad possibilities and perhaps even a wider tonal palette than the pairing of two strings with keyboard. As many of the compositions from the turn of the last century have been virtually ignored, this recording will feature two rarely performed (and previously unrecorded) horn trios from the beginning of the last century, as well the piece that most likely inspired them all.

Unlike many of the composers who have written for the horn trio, it is worth noting that Johannes could play each of these three instruments and the sound of the horn certainly occupied a special place in his childhood auditory memory. His father was a professional bass player in the Hamburg Philharmonic, but Jakob Brahms also played horn in the Hamburg Bürgerwehr (town militia band) for over 36 years. The horn would come to occupy a prominent role in Johannes' symphonic output, and the piano concerti also have important bits for the pairs of orchestral hand horns. In his first attempt to use the horn in chamber music (excluding the orchestral serenades), he combined a pair of horns with harp in the Opus 17 *Vier Gesänge für Frauenchor*,

written in 1860. The combination of string, brass and piano would seem to make issues of blend and balance problematic, but his predilection for the natural or hand horn, as opposed to the more modern valved instrument that was becoming increasingly more popular, made these issues much less pronounced. His insistence that each of the hornists with whom he performed this trio use the natural horn was indicative of the debate of his time. While a complete discussion of the natural vs. valved horn is not possible here, I believe a brief explanation is necessary. The natural horn (that relied upon the assortment of different length 'crooks' to change keys) would have blended the 'open' sounds of the natural harmonics with the 'stopped' sounds that were produced when the performer inserted his hand into the bell to obtain the notes not available on the harmonic series. In an effort to minimize the differences between the 'open' and 'stopped' notes, performers of the natural horn would often closely cover the bell with their hand, resulting in a more muted and veiled sound. Brahms preferred this timbre and felt that the new *Ventil-horn* (valved instrument) sacrificed the true sound of the instrument in favor of a more facile technique. Indeed, all three of the instruments that were in use during this

period; the violin strung with gut strings, the gentler pianoforte of the day, and the *Waldhorn* would have blended artfully in a way that modern instruments often have a difficult time in replicating.

In the life of the then 32-year-old Johannes, 1865 was a singular and pivotal year. In February, he received a telegram from his brother advising him to return to Hamburg, if he wished to see his mother before she died. Unfortunately, he was too late, and she died from a stroke while he was en route. Although she had certainly had a long and eventful life, her passing affected him deeply and in addition to *Ein deutsches Requiem*, the Trio must certainly have been one of the products of this emotion, as the third movement was the first piece of music written after her death. Even his Opus 41/1 chorus for male voices, *Ich schwing' mein Horn in's Jammerthal* (I blow my horn to Sorrow's Vale), which closely followed the *Trio, Op. 40*, would seem to indicate that his choice of the horn to express these profound feelings of loss was intentional. The third movement of this trio, marked *Adagio mesto* (*mesto* meaning mournful or sad) is one of the rare movements in which Brahms used this weighty tempo indication. Both the first and final movements

certainly pay homage to the roots of the horn as an instrument of the forest, the true *Waldhorn*, and the inspiration for the first movement was said to have come to him during one of his many walks in his beloved *Schwarzwald*. Prior to this trio, the horn was not a major participant in the chamber music catalogues of most composers, and Brahms' attention to the horn, coupled with the increased possibilities brought about by development of the chromatic valved instrument, certainly seemed to fuel the imaginations of composers that followed him. Indeed, this work stands out as one of the seminal and most highly-revered works in the career and life of every hornist. The premiere of the trio took place on November 28th, 1865 in Zürich with Brahms at the keyboard and was performed again soon after on December 5th in Karlsruhe Germany, again with Brahms at the keyboard, Strauss on violin and Segisser on the horn.

Théodore Dubois (née François-Clément-Théodore Dubois) spent his entire professional life in his native France. An organist who succeeded both César Franck at the church at Sainte-Clotilde in 1871 and Camille Saint-Saëns at the church of the Madeleine in 1877, he was

also the Director of the Paris Conservatoire for almost a decade and counted among his pupils Paul Dukas and Florent Schmitt. His major influence was as a teacher, having authored several treatises on counterpoint and harmony. His compositional output includes three symphonies and two piano trios but is focused on vocal works. The 1867 oratorio, *Les Sept Paroles du Christ*, and a small number of his organ compositions are among the few compositions that are still known to modern audiences. Very little is known about the brief and charming *Trio Cantabile*, other than its 1903 publication date.

Joseph Holbrooke, who changed his name to Josef later in life, is the most contemporary of the three composers featured on this disc. Born in the English town (now London borough) of Croydon in 1878, he began his piano studies at age twelve and later attended the Royal Academy of Music in London. While he devoted his primary energies to composition, his enviable day job found him as the conductor of a spa orchestra. His catalogue is sizeable and includes eight symphonies, two piano concerti, several tone poems, and a wide variety of chamber music works. The grand scale on which he wrote was similar to

one of his peers, Arnold Bax, and Holbrooke was at one time dubbed "the Cockney Wagner." His fascination with the literature of Edgar Allen Poe inspired two works for chorus and orchestra, as well as a ballet. His popularity peaked around the turn of the twentieth century and, owing to the sheer length of and considerable forces needed for the performance of his works, his compositions have faded into relative obscurity. The *Trio in D, Op. 28* was dedicated to Adolf Bersdorf, the hornist who performed the premiere during a Holbrooke chamber music concert on July 4th, 1904. In *Josef Holbrooke and His Work*, a 1920 biography, George Lowe, wrote:

This Trio, for the unusual combination of violin, horn and pianoforte, is one of the brightest and most genial of Holbrooke's works. It is also uniformly melodious, and, in its middle movement, attains to a considerable dignity and beauty of expression. Its sentiment has, to a large extent, been suggested by lines from Byron's *Don Juan* –

"There's music in the sighing of a reed:
There's music in the gushing of a rill,
There's music in all things if men had ears;
Their earth is but an echo of the spheres."

As a performer, I find myself drawn to and fascinated by the stories behind the recordings we hear. Because I believe that music is about the deep and lasting connections that are made before and after the concert (as well as during), a brief bit of background on the participants: Stephen Prutsman and I began playing concerts featuring the Brahms Trio in the 1980's under the auspices of that wonderful organization, Young Concert Artists, and have since performed together in cities from Bogotá to Chattanooga. Jennifer Frautschi and I performed for the first time together at a chamber music concert in Boston in 1997, and have since regularly collaborated both professionally and personally, as we are now married. Producer Gregg Squires and I made our first recording together for Musical Heritage Society almost exactly 20 years ago (on April 1st, 1990) and have since made five other recordings. I approached Susan Bush at Albany Records in 2000 with a recording for horn and piano and no takers, and here I am, 10 years and four projects later, still thrilled to hear her voice. Life is about the journey, not the destination, and I am so grateful to have been able to share it with each one of these people.

—Eric Ruske

Avery Fisher career grant recipient violinist **Jennifer Frautschi** has gained acclaim as an adventurous performer with a wide-ranging repertoire. As the *Chicago Tribune* wrote, “the young violinist Jennifer Frautschi is molding a career with smart interpretations of both warhorses and rarities.” Equally at home in the classic repertoire as well as 20th and 21st century works, in the past few seasons alone she has performed the Britten *Concerto*, Poul Ruders’ *Concerto No. 1*, Steven Mackey’s *Violin Sonata*, and Mendelssohn’s rarely played *Concerto in D Minor*, along with standards such as the Mozart, Tchaikovsky and Berg Concerti.

Ms. Frautschi has created a sensation with appearances as soloist with Pierre Boulez and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Christoph Eschenbach and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at the Ravinia Festival, and at Wigmore Hall and Lincoln Center’s Mostly Mozart Festival. She has also soloed in recent seasons with the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, Cincinnati Symphony, Kansas City Symphony, Louisville Orchestra, Orchestra of St. Luke’s, San Diego Symphony, Seattle Symphony, and Utah Symphony.

Selected by Carnegie Hall for its Distinctive Debuts series, she made her New York recital

debut in 2004. As part of the European Concert Hall Organization’s Rising Stars series, Ms. Frautschi also made debuts that year at ten of Europe’s most celebrated concert venues, including London’s Wigmore Hall, Salzburg Mozarteum, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Vienna Konzerthaus, and La Cité de la Musique in Paris. She has also been heard in recital at the Ravinia Festival, La Jolla Chamber Music Society, Washington’s Phillips Collection, Boston’s Gardner Museum, Beijing’s Imperial Garden, Monnaie Opera in Brussels, La Chaux des Fonds in Switzerland, and San Miguel de Allende Festival in Mexico.

As a chamber artist, Ms. Frautschi performs often at the Boston Chamber Music Society, Caramoor (where she has appeared annually since she was first invited there at the age of 18 by Andre Previn), Chamber Music Northwest (in Portland, OR), and the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival. She has also appeared at the Charlottesville, La Jolla Summerfest, La Musica (Sarasota), Moab, Music@Menlo, Newport, Rome, Seattle, Spoleto (Italy), and St. Barth’s (French West Indies) Chamber Music Festivals, as well as at New York’s Metropolitan and Guggenheim Museums of Art, the 92nd Street Y, and Mainly Mozart in San Diego. She

has premiered important new works by Mason Bates, Oliver Knussen, Krzysztof Penderecki, Michael Hersch, and others, and has appeared at New York’s George Crumb Festival and Stefan Wolpe Centenary Concerts. Formerly a member of Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, she is a frequent guest at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.

Her growing discography includes three widely-praised CDs for Artek: an orchestral debut recording of the Prokofiev concerti with Gerard Schwarz and the Seattle Symphony, and highly-acclaimed discs of music of Ravel and Stravinsky, and of 20th century works for solo violin. She has also recorded several discs for Naxos, including a Grammy-nominated recording of Schoenberg’s *Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra*, and the Stravinsky *Violin Concerto* with the Philharmonia Orchestra of London, both conducted by the legendary Robert Craft, as well as the Schoenberg *Third String Quartet* (with the Fred Sherry String Quartet) and Stravinsky *Duo Concertant* (with pianist Jeremy Denk).

Born in Pasadena, California, Ms. Frautschi began the violin at age three. She was a student of Robert Lipsett at the Colburn School for the Performing Arts in Los Angeles.

She also attended Harvard and the New England Conservatory of Music, where she studied with James Buswell, and The Juilliard School, where she was a pupil of Robert Mann.

Pianist **Stephen Prutsman** has been described as one of the most innovative musicians of his time. Moving easily from classical to jazz to world music styles as a pianist, composer and conductor, Prutsman continues to explore and seek common ground in the music of all cultures and languages. Recently he was appointed Artistic Director of the Cartagena International Festival of Music, South America’s largest festival of its kind, programming and curating concerts with themes ranging from Mozart celebrations, to eclectic evenings of folk and popular music of the Americas, to hybrid programs fusing art and dance music of multiple musical dimensions.

From 2004-2007 Stephen was Artistic Partner with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, where he led in performance concertos from the keyboard, performed in chamber ensembles, conducted works of living composers, developed and arranged collaborations for their Engine 408 series of contemporary and world music, and wrote several new works for the orchestra.

In the early 90's Stephen was a medal winner at the Tchaikovsky and Queen Elisabeth Piano Competitions, and received the Avery Fisher Career Grant. He has since performed the classical concerto repertoire as soloist with many of the world's leading orchestras including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Symphony Orchestras of San Francisco, Baltimore, Detroit, Indianapolis, Seattle, Dallas, Houston, WDR Radio Orchestra Cologne, Prague Radio Symphony and the Orchestre National d'Île de France. His classical discography includes acclaimed recordings of the Barber and McDowell concerti with the B.B.C. Scottish Symphony Orchestra and National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland. Committed to chamber music, Stephen has collaborated with many of the world's great string quartets and soloists and often performs with his trio Nobilis both in major cultural centers and in diverse locales throughout the developing world. The trio has recently released a recording of the music of Tchaikovsky.

Stephen first began playing the piano by ear at age 3, before moving on to more formal music studies. In his teens and early 20s he was the keyboard player for several art rock groups including Cerberus and Vysion. He was also

during those years a solo jazz pianist playing in many southern California clubs and lounges and was the music arranger for a nationally syndicated televangelist program. A former student of Aube Tzerko and Leon Fleisher, Stephen studied at the University of California at Los Angeles and the Peabody Conservatory of Music.

As a composer, Stephen's long collaboration with Grammy Award winning Kronos Quartet has resulted in more than 40 arrangements and compositions for them. Other leading artists and ensembles who have performed Stephen's compositions and arrangements include Leon Fleisher, Dawn Upshaw, the St. Lawrence Quartet, Yo-Yo Ma, Spoleto USA, and the Silk Road Project. As a pianist or arranger outside of the classical music world he has collaborated with such diverse personalities as Tom Waits, Rokia Traore, Joshua Redman, Sigur Rós and Asha Bhosle.

In years past his dedication to the creation of new musical environments led him to create music festivals in such far-flung places as the island of Guam and the border town of El Paso, Texas. Passionate about the value of music for all, Stephen is active promoting music and arts education wherever he visits, and continues to be a leader in the Cartagena Music Festival's

musical outreach program, bringing free concerts and classes to outlying areas of the city. Stephen lives in San Francisco.

Horn soloist **Eric Ruske** has established himself as an artist of international acclaim. Named Associate Principal Horn of The Cleveland Orchestra at the age of 20, he also toured and recorded extensively during his six-year tenure as hornist of the Empire Brass Quintet. His impressive solo career began when he won the 1986 Young Concert Artists International Auditions, First Prize in the 1987 American Horn Competition, and in 1988, the highest prize in the Concours International d'Interprétation Musicale in Reims, France.

Of his recording of the complete Mozart Concerti with Sir Charles Mackerras and the Scottish Camber Orchestra, the New York Times stated, "Mr. Ruske's approach, firmly positioned with the boundaries of balance, coherence and good taste that govern the Classical Style, enchants by virtue of its confidence, imagination and ebullient virtuosity". Performances as soloist include appearances with the Baltimore Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony, Shanghai Radio Broadcast Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Jacksonville Symphony, European Camerata, San

Diego Symphony, Boston Pops Orchestra, Kansas City Symphony, Seoul Philharmonic and a tour with the Israel Chamber Orchestra throughout Israel. His recitals have been presented in venues such as the Louvre in Paris, the 92nd Street Y in New York, the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., Dukes Hall in London, and the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing.

An active chamber musician, he has appeared with the Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Festival de Música de Santa Catarina in Brazil, Moab Music Festival, Newport Music Festival, Spoleto Festival, Festival de Musique in St. Barthélemy, OK Mozart International Festival, Evian Festival, La Musica in Sarasota, Bargemusic in Brooklyn, Music from Angel Fire, Boston Chamber Music Society, and the Festival Pablo Casals both in Puerto Rico and in France. Mr. Ruske is in great demand as a teacher and clinician, and in addition to having given master classes at over one hundred universities and conservatories in the United States, he has taught at the Royal Academy of Music in London, Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, Banff Centre in Canada, Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow, Tokyo College of

Music, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, the College of Music at Seoul National University and most recently, at the Ionian Academy in Corfu, Greece.

On the Albany Records label, Mr. Ruske has released four previous solo discs: a collection of unaccompanied horn repertoire entitled *Just me and my horn*, two discs of virtuoso transcriptions for horn and piano, *The Classic Horn* and *Virtuoso Music for Horn and Piano*, and also *The Romantic Horn Concerti*, a complete recording of the Strauss and Glière horn concerti. He has also made the world premiere recording of the *Concierto Evocativo* for horn and string orchestra by Roberto Sierra, and a disc of Mozart Concerti on Telarc. The numerous arrangements and transcriptions Mr. Ruske created for these recordings are now available from Cimarron Music Press. A student of Dale Clevenger and Eugene Chausow, he grew up in LaGrange, Illinois and is a graduate of Northwestern University. He has been the recipient of grants from the National Philanthropic Institute, the Saunders Foundation, the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts, the International Institute of Education, and Boston University. Joining architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe,

trumpeter Miles Davis and comedian Richard Pryor, Mr. Ruske was inducted into the Illinois Hall of Fame in 2007. Professor of Horn and member of the faculty of Boston University since 1990, Mr. Ruske also directs the Horn Seminar at the Boston University Tanglewood Institute.

Having produced and engineered more than 5,000 recordings over the last 30 years, **Gregory K. Squires** is the President and founder of both Squires Productions and of the MSR Classics record label. He began his musical career studying the horn at the Manhattan School of Music, where he received his B.M and M.M in Horn Performance, and then continued his studies at Yale University. He performed as Principal Horn of the Buffalo Philharmonic under Lukas Foss and was a member of the Radio City Music Hall Orchestra. He served on the faculty of the Manhattan School of Music for nineteen years. The deserved recipient of much critical acclaim, Mr. Squires has won two Grammy Awards and was a Grammy Nominee for the "Best Classical Producer of the Year" in 1998.

Recorded April 2nd and 3rd, 2010 in the Masonic Temple in Boston, MA.

Produced, engineered and edited by Gregory K. Squires, Squires Productions, Inc.

Photo credits: Karen Snyder Photography.

I would like to dedicate this recording to Jack, Eliot, Julian and Siena and thank them for being my constant inspiration.

In making this recording, I would like to thank both Stephen and Jennifer for their artistry and patience. I would also like to thank Mr. Coleman Casey and the Saunders Foundation, Mr. Lachlan Pitcairn and the National Philanthropic Trust, Jim Phelan, and Boston University for their generous financial support.

Ms. Fruitschi performs on a 1722 Antonio Stradivarius violin known as the "ex-Cadiz," which is on generous loan to her from a private American foundation.

For this recording, Mr. Prutsman played a 1988 Steinway D Artist Series Concert Grand; it is an American Steinway with Renner action.

Mr. Ruske plays an F/B-flat horn made by S. W. Lewis Orchestral Horns.

For more information on the individual artists, please visit:

www.jenniferfruitschi.com

www.stephenprutsman.com

www.ericruske.com

Other recordings of Eric Ruske available on Albany Records:

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Johannes Brahms | Trio in E-flat Major, Op. 40
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Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Trio in E-flat Major, Op. 40

- 1 Andante [8:21]
- 2 Scherzo [7:09]
- 3 Adagio mesto [7:48]
- 4 Finale — Allegro con brio [6:12]

Théodore Dubois (1837-1924)

- 5 *Trio Cantabile** [3:46]

Josef Holbrooke (1878-1958)

*Trio in D, Op. 28**

- 6 Larghetto sostenuto — Allegro con brio [11:23]
- 7 Adagio non troppo [10:56]
- 8 Molto vivace [8:14]

Total Time = 63:48

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