



**The Diablo Regional Arts Association
presents the**

**2003-2004 Season
Program I**

**Daniel Banner, violin
John Chisholm, violin
Christina King, viola
Barbara Andres, cello
Marc Shapiro, piano**

**Grace Presbyterian Church
Sunday October 26, 2003 4pm**



Welcome to the opening concert of the Sierra Chamber Society's 17th Concert Season. Today's season opener is a work for violin and viola by Kallifornia's second-most-favorite Austrian. This is followed by an enchanting piano trio by a composer whose name and work you probably have never heard before. I daresay that after hearing it you will wonder why you haven't heard more of his music performed. Following the intermission, the program then closes with a perennial favorite by France's all-time money maker.

"The past is never, as our jargon implies, a fixed quantity; it is in movement ¼ Mozart, for his contemporaries, was not the serene classic, the apostle of measure and perfection that so many of his nineteenth century admirers, and even some today, have liked to conjure up. On the contrary, he was for them a painter of intense and even somber canvases, of large scope and vast design."

Roger Sessions, *Lectures* ¹

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)
Duo for Violin and Viola in B Flat, K. 424 (1783)

"People err who think my art comes easily to me. I assure you, dear friend, nobody has devoted so much time and thought to composition as I. There is not a famous master whose music I have not industriously studied through many times."

W. A. Mozart ²

The B flat major Duo K. 424 is the second of a pair composed by Mozart in the space of two days.

The story goes that in July of 1783 Mozart was visiting his hometown of Salzburg with the idea of presenting his bride of almost a year, Constanza, to his family. Papa Leopold Mozart had not been happy with his son's marriage. While in Salzburg, Mozart paid a visit to his friend Michael Haydn, younger brother to Franz Joseph. Michael was in the service of the Archbishop Collerado of Salzburg – whom Mozart (as well as most of the Viennese nobility and the Emperor himself) detested. Michael was on the hook for a set of 6 duos for violin and viola that the Archbishop had commissioned. Upon visiting Michael, he found his friend quite ill, with only four of the six duos completed, and "His Holiness" the Archbishop



threatening to stop his salary unless all 6 duos of the commission were completed. “With unmistakable pleasure” as he put it, Mozart completed the other two duos, in his friend’s name. In quality and inspiration, Mozart’s two duos were far and above Haydn’s other four. It must have amused him to know that the Archbishop would not be able to tell the difference. The reward was fourfold; in composing these duos, Mozart was able to help out a friend, thumb his ample nose at an enemy, and provide the world with two unusual masterpieces. Genius aside, Mozart was especially suited to the challenge of a work of seemingly limited resources. As a composer of opera, he wrote beautifully for voices, solo or in concert. Secondly, his love for the viola assured that the viola part would be equal to that of the violin, and not a mere accompaniment, as in Michael Haydn’s duos.

The Sierra Chamber Society presented a performance of the Duo in G, K.423, during our 2001-02 Season. The work to be performed today, the B Flat Duo, is a work of larger scope than its predecessor.

The Duo opens with an introductory Adagio before proceeding to the body of the Sonata-Allegro movement. In 6/8 meter, the Andante cantabile second movement is a graceful Siciliana. The final movement consists of a Theme with 6 variations & coda.

1 Quote from *Mozartiana* by Joseph Solman Vintage Books, New York, 1990
2 *Op.cit.*

“Over his work, just as over his life, hangs the shadow of homelessness: not Swiss, not Russian, not German; not Romantic, not Modernist, not Folklorist. And yet he was a little of all of these: and more, because he was a sincere and humanly impressive personality.”

Claus-Christian Schuster¹

Paul Juon (1872 - 1940)
Trio for Piano, Violin and Cello in A minor Op. 17 (1901)

Paul Juon (pronounced “You win” - though that be might how it sounds if you are afflicted with a Lon Gisland accent; Kallifornians probably pronounce it “You won”) was a very successful and well respected composer during his lifetime. Born in Moscow to a German mother and Swiss father,



he attended the Moscow Conservatory where he studied composition with Taneyev and Arensky (teachers of Rachmaninoff, Scriabin, Medtner et.al.) He completed his musical studies at the High School for Music in Berlin (Berlin Conservatory), where he was awarded the Mendelssohn Prize. Following this, he briefly taught violin and theory at the Baku Conservatory in Baku, Azerbaijan. He then returned to Berlin in 1897 where from 1901-03 he held the Berlin Franz Liszt scholarship. His work attracted the attention of the music publisher Robert Lienau², who brought out editions of his works. In addition, in 1906 Brahms' buddy Joseph Joachim hired him to teach at the Berlin Conservatory, where in 1911 he was appointed professor of composition, a post he held until he left Germany in 1934. In 1919 he was elected a member of the Berlin Academy of Arts. In 1929 the Prussian Academy of Arts awarded him the prestigious Beethoven Prize for his corpus of work. Citing health reasons, not to mention the political climate of the emerging Third Reich, Juon and his family emigrated to Switzerland where he lived out the rest of his life.

In his article in the fifth edition of Grove's, Edwin Evans writes; "Juon's style is an interesting blend of Russian and German, the material being almost invariably Slav in character, while the treatment thoroughly German, leaning often toward Brahms. His powers of development are strong and characterized by solidity of thought, while the danger of heaviness is cleverly avoided by the use of an exceptional rhythmic ingenuity, probably as Slav in its origin as the themes he uses. He relied to a large extent on contrapuntal device, at which he was an adept, but he occasionally allowed himself to drift into sequential passages (*shades of Tchaikovsky & Rachmaninoff*) which are lacking in interest, and he had an inordinate love for the variation form." (*That's like saying a writer has an "inordinate" love of verbs or nouns.*)

While Juon composed orchestral works, concerti, piano music and choral works, chamber music comprises a substantial amount of his musical compositions. Among the varied chamber works, are six piano trios. The work to be heard today is the first of his piano trios. Indeed it is the most "Russian" sounding of his piano trios. It is a highly-colored work (and speaking of color, Paul Juon's younger brother Konstantin, was one of the foremost Russian painters at the beginning of the 20th Century) filled with exciting rhythms, modal harmonies, and lovely, exotic melodies at times ala Borodin. The integration of the three instruments is masterful. The movements are concise, never wearing out their welcome. I think you will enjoy the "discovery" of this forgotten master.



1 Quote from program notes to Altenberg Trio Wien's CD of the Piano Trios of Paul Juon on Challenge Classics #72002 . Claus-Christian Schuster is the Altenberg Trio Wien's pianist.

2 It was no small chore to locate the music for the Piano Trio No. 1, Op.17, as it is out of print. We were able to have a photocopy of the parts made from the copy in the Robert Lienau archives in Berlin.

"I see Ravel as a classic, a Mozart of our century. And as such, he must be the source of inspiration for all those who want to write durable, super-temporal, capable of surviving."

Witold Lutoslawski (1972)¹

Maurice Ravel (1875 - 1937) **String Quartet in F major (1902-03)**

Ravel's only String Quartet, often considered his first masterpiece, was composed when he was 28 years old and completing his studies at the Paris Conservatory. He was enrolled at the Conservatory at the age of fourteen and despite his many years of study there and obvious musical gifts, he was never awarded the coveted *Grand Prix de Rome*. He tried for it four times and never got more than second prize. In his final attempt in 1905, he never got past the preliminary competition. It might be said that his failure to be considered in 1905 did more to help launch his career than had he won the prize. Most of those winners of this most coveted prize have long been forgotten, both the men and their music. Denying a composer of Ravel's gifts this prize was seen to be scandalous. The music critics, who had hereto been cool toward him, rallied to his cause, and in the ensuing uproar, the head of the Conservatory was forced to resign, and was replaced by Gabriel Faure, who had been a teacher of Ravel's.

The Quartet was premiered a year before this by the Heyman Quartet on March 5, 1904 at a concert of the Societe National in Paris. Although the work was enthusiastically received, it did not win unanimous approval. Gabriel Faure, to whom the work was dedicated, described the last movement as "stunted, badly balanced, in fact a failure." (*Talk about gracious*). Other critics urged major revisions in the piece. However, no less a composer than Claude Debussy wrote to Ravel, "In the name of the Gods of music and in my own, do not touch a single note you have written in your



Quartet.” (*Ravel biographer Benjamin Ivry states that there is no source to verify that this was ever said by Debussy*)

Two years later, a critic in the New York Tribune wrote, “In his String Quartet M. Ravel is content with one theme which has the emotional potency of one of those tunes which the curious may hear in a Chinese theater, shrieked out by an ear-splitting clarinet. This theme serves him for four movements during which there is about as much emotional nuance as warms a problem in algebra. It is a drastic dose of wormwood and assafoetida.” (Wormwood is a very bitter tasting herb used in making absinthe; assafoetida, a foul smelling and tasting gum resin used as an antispasmodic, as well as a repellent against dogs, cats and rabbits).

Our current take on this work is, that it remains one of the most popular and often played string quartets in the literature. In it can be found those well-wrought, yet sensual melodies, amazing range of tone color, vibrant rhythm and touch of the exotic that characterizes Ravel’s music.

The first lyrical movement is in Sonata form featuring the interplay of two contrasting themes.

The second movement features rhythmic complexity and pizzicato. The 1st violin and the cello play in 3/4 time broken down into 3 groups of two eighth notes (2+2+2), while the 2nd violin and viola play in 6/8 time (3+3), so that each measure contains six eighth notes but because of their groupings, they are stressed differently. There is a contrasting slow middle section and a shortened reprise of the opening section.

The slow third movement also uses melodic material from the first movement and displays Ravel’s gift for achieving a remarkably wide range of tone colors from the four stringed instrument. Ravel’s muse always thrived on limitation, the more circumscribed, the more it flowered.

The finale contains another interesting rhythm. This time, 5/8 and, indeed, in this movement the opening theme of the first also plays a significant part.

We can be grateful that Ravel followed Debussy’s advice, rather than Faure’s. Although Ravel was very finicky and self-critical regarding his works, admittedly seeking technical mastery and perfection above all else, he regarded this early work warmly, and expressed the thought late in his life



that perhaps he had sacrificed what was best in this early work, its boldness and spontaneity for the technical brilliance of his later work. Was this mere rumination on his part?

1 Quote from *Maurice Ravel - A Life* by Benjamin Ivry. Welcome Rain Publishers. N.Y. 2000

Program Notes by Joseph Way

The Musicians

Daniel Banner, violin, has been an acting member of the San Francisco Symphony since 1997. Before moving to San Francisco he was an acting member of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and assistant concertmaster of the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra. He has performed as concertmaster of many Boston area groups including, Emmanuel Music, New Hampshire Symphony, Boston Lyric Opera, Opera Company of Boston, Handel and Haydn Society, and Monadnock Music. He studied at Harvard University and MIT.

John Chisholm, violin, has been a member of the San Francisco Symphony for the last two years. After receiving a BA and Performance Certificate from the Eastman School of Music, he played with the Rochester Philharmonic as a first violinist. He has also served as Associate Concertmaster of the Louisville Symphony.

Christina King, viola, joined the San Francisco Symphony's viola section in the Fall of 1996. She has been a member of the Tucson Symphony Orchestra, was principal violist in the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, (training orchestra of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra), and has also played with Lyric Opera of Chicago and various orchestras in Mexico City. She received a Master's in Music from Northwestern University, and an A.B. in English from Barnard College/Columbia University.

Barbara Andres, cello, is a graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Music where she studied with Lynn Harrell and Stephen Geber. She has been a member of the San Francisco Symphony since 1977. She was cello performance coach for the San Francisco Youth Orchestra for four years and since 1999 has performed the same role as mentor and coach for young



performers at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. She is active as a recitalist and chamber musician throughout the Bay Area, and has appeared as Principal Cellist of the Sierra Chamber Society for the last twelve seasons.

Marc Shapiro, piano, is accompanist of the San Francisco Symphony Chorus. He has been a featured soloist in Les Noces, Saint-Saens' Carnival of the Animals, and James P. Johnson's Yamekraw with the San Francisco Symphony, as well as annual concerts with the San Francisco Symphony Chorus. Mr. Shapiro plays principal keyboard with the California Symphony and performs with other ensembles such as Composer's Inc., San Francisco Choral Artists, San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, and on Chamber Music Sundae, San Francisco Symphony Chamber Music Series and The Mohonk Festival of the Arts in New York.

Music has often been compared with language itself, and the comparison is quite legitimate. While it combines easily with actual language, it also speaks a language of its own, which it has become a platitude to call universal. To understand the significance of the organizing factors of rhythm, melody, harmony, tone color and form, the analogy of a familiar language is helpful. Music has its own alphabet of only seven letters, as compared with the twenty-six of the English alphabet. Each of these letters represents a note, and just as certain letters are complete words in themselves, so certain notes may stand alone, with the force of a whole word. Generally, however, a note of music implies a certain harmony, and in most modern music the notes take the form of actual chords. So it may be said that a chord in music is analogous to a word in language. Several words form a phrase, and several phrases a complete sentence, and the same thing is true in music. Measured music corresponds to poetry, while the old unmeasured plain-song might be compared with prose.

Sigmund Spaeth (1885–1965), U.S. musicologist. *The Art of Enjoying Music*, McGraw-Hill (1933).



Sierra Chamber Society 2003-2004 Season

December 14, 2003

Britten - String Quartet Op. 25 No. 1
Schoenfeld - Cafe Music
Mendelssohn - String Quintet Op. 87 in B flat

February 8, 2004

Haydn - String Quartet from Op. 33
Bartok - Contrasts
Korngold - String Quartet No. 2

April 25, 2004

Bach - Flute Sonata
Dahl - Concerto a tres for Clarinet, Violin, and Cello
Ligeti - Bagatelles for Wind Quintet
Poulenc - Sextet for Piano and Wind Quartet

June 13, 2004

Boccherini - Guitar Quintet
Ravel - Duo for Violin and Cello
Brahms - Piano Quintet in F minor

The Sierra Chamber Society:

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Joseph Way, Artistic Director
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f FUGUEMASTERS!!
For keeping the "K" in Kallifornia

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www.fuguemasters.com/scs.html