

The Hawai'i Concert Society
presents



AOI TRIO

Kosuke Akimoto, piano

Kyoko Ogawa, violin

Yu Ito, cello

Friday, February 7, 2025, 7:00 p.m.

University of Hawai'i at Hilo Performing Arts Center

Concert Sponsors: Dr Robert Shapiro and Dr. Young Klm



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Only five times in history has the ARD international music competition awarded the first prize for piano trios. The **Aoi Trio** won this prestigious first prize in 2018, only two years after the trio was founded, which made a breathtaking start to their career. Their performances during the competition were so far in advance of other competitors that the judges decided to award two third prizes, but no second prize.

The Aoi Trio was founded in 2016 by pianist **Kosuke Akimoto**, violinist **Kyoko Ogawa**, and cellist **Yu Ito**, all of whom graduated from the Tokyo University of the Arts and studied at the renowned Chamber Music Academy of Suntory Hall (Tokyo) for 2 years. After winning at ARD competition, they continued studying under Dirk Mommertz (Fauré Quartett) at the University of Music and Theater in Munich Germany.

Since winning the ARD Competition, the Aoi Trio has performed more than 20 concerts every year at major venues, not only in Japan but Germany, Italy, France, the Czech Republic, and Singapore. Their current Hawai'i tour (five concerts) is their first in the USA.

The Aoi Trio has released six recordings, containing trios by Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Dvorak, and Martinu. They have received the Aoyama Music Award, Nippon Steel Music Award, Hotel Okura Music Award and Music Pen Club Award.

“Aoi” refers to the initial letters of their individual family names and is also the name of a flower in Japanese language, which is commonly known as ‘hollyhock’ in Europe and symbolizes “aspiration” or “fruitfulness.”

PROGRAM

Piano Trio in G major, Hob: XV-25 (1795)

Andante

Poco adagio, cantabile

Rondo all'Ongharese: Presto

Josef Haydn

(1732-1809)

Nui (2022)

Dai Fujikura

(b. 1977)

Nui 2 (2024, commissioned by Aoi Trio)

Dai Fujikura

Piano Trio No. 1 in C minor, Op. 8 (1924)

Dmitri Shostakovich

(1906-1975)

Intermission

Piano Trio No.2 in C minor, Op. 66 (1845)

Allegro energetico e con fuoco

Andante espressivo

Scherzo: Molto allegro quasi presto

Finale: Allegro appassionato

Felix Mendelssohn

(1809-1847)

FOR YOUR INFORMATION and FOR MAXIMUM AUDIENCE ENJOYMENT:

Recording and photographic equipment are prohibited.

If you arrive after the performance has begun, please remain in the rear of the auditorium. Move forward only when music is not being performed.

Please turn off your cellular phone and silence alarms and beepers.

Please do not bring infants to concerts.

Please keep children seated, quiet, and still. They can distract audience and artists.

In deference to those with allergies, do not wear strong perfumes.

*It is generally appropriate to applaud **only at the end of a set of pieces, not in between the pieces.***

The Hawai'i Concert Society thanks you for your cooperation.

PROGRAM NOTES

Franz Joseph Haydn was one of the greatest composers of Western classical music. He led the transition from the Baroque into the Classical period, refining and inventing many forms and influencing countless composers, most notably Mozart and Beethoven, whom he mentored.

Haydn enjoyed a career renaissance during his travels to London. He wrote his most famous piano trio, No. 39 in G Major, Hob. XV/25 in 1795, near the end of his second trip. While there he met Rebecca Schroeder, the woman to whom this piano trio is dedicated. Schroeder was a young widow, who worked as a music copyist. Haydn engaged her for his London sojourn and, as the surviving letters indicate, their relationship soon moved beyond the professional. Some years later he showed the copies of her letters to his first biographer, identifying them as “letters from an English widow in London who loved me. Though I was 60 years old, she was still loving and amiable, and in all likelihood I would have married her if I had been single.”

This evening’s trio is the second of the three that Haydn dedicated to Mrs. Schroeder. The first movement is an easy-going and graceful set of variations; the second a tender, prayer-like adagio. The trio closes with one of Haydn’s best known movements, the high-spirited “Gypsy” Rondo, in the style that Haydn had brought to England from Hungary. Its principal theme bears a striking resemblance to that of *Dueling Banjos*, and the piece gives the performers the opportunity to drop their genteel demeanor and put the pedal to the metal. Haydn’s use of a leisurely movement followed by an even slower one intensifies the effect of this brilliant finale, and made this Trio an enormous favorite in England and soon after throughout Europe

Dai Fujikura was born in 1977 in Osaka, Japan. He moved to London when he was 15 to study music at Dover College. His initial ambition was to compose music for cinema. However, after studying the music of Pierre Boulez, Gyorgy Ligeti, and Toru Takemitsu, Dai became an aspiring composer whose extensive knowledge of cinematography gave his music a fresh voice. His imagining sounds as images produced music with dramatic structure and strength. Before graduating, Dai's music had been broadcast on many

European radio stations, won numerous prizes, and has now been performed by a multitude of illustrious ensembles and soloists.

About the first Nui compositions, Fujikura has written the following. “The inspiration for ‘Nui’ came from an email from Anne-Lise, a member of Trio George Sand, who commissioned the piece. In Anne-Lise’s email, she wrote about Setsuko Klossowska de Rola’s work. Intrigued, I bought one of Setsuko Klossowska de Rola’s books. In her writing, she continuously talks about kimonos and describes the dying process used for them. This really fascinated me! And thus came the idea behind this trio which involves colouring, either the distinctive colours of kimonos or, really, any type of dye. I imagined a droplet of colour falling, gracefully descending into water or onto clothes. And then, the colour spreads, following a specific technique of colour dye that Klossowska de Rola discusses, which begins to take on form and shapes.”

“ ‘Nui’ means ‘stitching’ in Japanese. It is one of the techniques of colour dye used in kimonos, as Setsuko Klossowska de Rola mentions in her book.”

Dmitri Shostakovich composed his first piano trio at the age of 17 . He had already studied at the Petrograd Conservatory for three years when he composed it. It is a short, one-movement work, reflecting the cautious melodic and harmonic language of the conservative faculty. The impertinent and rebellious Shostakovich of his First Symphony was still two years off.

This was a difficult time for Shostakovich. His father had died in 1922 and he was supporting his mother and sisters as a cinema pianist. He had spent some time in a sanatorium in an attempt to recuperate from tuberculosis. He also was deeply in love with a fellow student, Tatiana Glivenko, the daughter of an eminent philosophy professor. Through correspondence and personal contacts, he continued to pursue Tatiana off and on for six years, losing interest only after she married another man and started to raise a family.

On April 7, 1924, Shostakovich played the Trio as part of his successful audition for entry into the Moscow Conservatory. Another performance took place on March 20, 1925 at the Moscow Conservatory. It was performed several more times, but then lay in obscurity until 1983, when it was published with the reconstruction of a missing passage of twenty-two measures in the piano part, made in 1981 by Shostakovich student Boris Tischenko.

The single-movement trio contains both recognizable Shostakovich traits and the signs of a student work. The sonata is rough at times, but there is enough brilliantly unique music present that it is not surprising that only two years later he would compose his triumphant first symphony.

Felix Mendelssohn was born into a wealthy, German Jewish family. His grandfather was the celebrated philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, and his father, Abraham, was a successful banker. Raised in Berlin, Felix and his beloved sister Fanny were both formidable child prodigies, brought up in a rich cultural home, where their talents could flourish. Mendelssohn's remarkable musical abilities were encouraged by his loving parents, who enabled him to hear his early pieces performed at home by a private orchestra for their associates, who included the intellectual elite of Berlin. By his middle teens Mendelssohn was composing works of stunning maturity and originality, including a string octet and "Overture to A Midsummer Night's Dream." Among his many enthusiasms was a lifelong passion for the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. Mendelssohn made history as a conductor when, at the age of just 20, he presided over a performance of Bach's St. Matthew Passion, the first major European revival of Bach's long-neglected music. Mendelssohn's love of Bach is reflected in the noble chorale tune that dominates much of the final movement of the Piano Trio in C Minor that we hear this evening.

On January 21, 1832, Mendelssohn wrote from Paris to Fanny, "I should like to compose a couple of good trios." Over a decade earlier he had written a trio for piano, violin, and viola that he never published, but he did not compose a "good trio"—one he thought worthy of publication, and which was hailed by Schumann as "the master Trio of the age"—until 1839. Mendelssohn finally made good on his 1832 wish when in 1845 he composed a second piano trio—his last—the present C minor, two years before the end of his short life.

The first movement starts in a restless, urgent and mysterious hush, which eventually gives way to a sunnier, more rhapsodic duet for violin and cello. The atmosphere vacillates between emotional poles, culminating in a stormy, C minor coda. In contrast, Mendelssohn composed a warmly reassuring Song Without Words in E-flat major as the basis of the second

movement. Throughout his life Mendelssohn composed Lieder ohne Worte for solo piano, often as gifts to his sister. This movement begins with a glowing piano solo, strongly reminiscent of the style of these intimate works, and continues with a gentle, lilting duet for violin and cello.

The breathtakingly fleet Scherzo recalls other movements by Mendelssohn in this vein, such as that from the Octet or the *Midsummer Night's Dream* music. The finale, again in sonata form, contrasts material in the minor and major modes, shifting from tempest to calm. Mendelssohn reserves his dramatic master stroke for the development, where he modulates into the dominant, A-flat, and combines fragments of the opening theme with the Lutheran chorale "Vor deinen Thron," introduced first by the piano, then taken up by the violin. This hymn, a plea from the sinner to God not to abandon him when he dies, returns as the work's coda, a triumphant affirmation that is nearly symphonic in its scope.

- compiled by Tom Geballe

Coming Attaction

On Friday, February 28 we will present the young multi-award winning violinist Nathan Meltzer. Winner of the 2023 Concert Artist Guild Competition, major prize winner at the 2022 Sibelius and Singapore International Violin Competitions, and youngest ever to win the Windsor Festival Competition, Meltzer is establishing a multi-faceted career as a soloist and chamber musician. He and accompanist Wynona Wang will perform sonatas by Brahms, Fauré and the young American composer Hannah Ishizaki, whose music has been described as "imaginative...effective and moving" by the New York Times. Tickets will be in the outlets next week.

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