

# “Two Worlds, One Stage”

## Program Notes

The first chamber music concerts in history were held not on stage but in private homes or small court spaces of nobles during the Renaissance (1400-1600). Previously, instruments had only been accompaniment to voices. Instrumentalists continued to come together for fun or for religious services even though the presence of nobility diminished. As the Baroque period unfolded (1600 -1700), standard instrument combinations developed, such as the “trio sonata” for two higher melody instruments, plus a bass and chordal instrument. Yes, the “trio” was often four instruments. Then in the Classical era (1750-1820) under Joseph Haydn, the most developed form of the trio sonata, the string quartet, took hold. Fast forward to Brahms’ position in chamber music history.

To set up our comparison between the Romantic world of Brahms and the world of, yet un-named, twenty-first century music composition, let’s consider what Albert Einstein, the musicologist, said in *A Short History of Music*, “There had been romanticism in music long before there were romantic composers...chromaticism suggesting subtle emotion, in the madrigal; the flight of Buxtehude’s organ fantasias; the passionate poetry in Bach’s expression of his longing for death ...What happened now [in the Romantic age] was not so much a discovery as a new angle of vision.”

**Johannes Brahms** (1833-1897) along with other Romantic composers Schubert, Mendelssohn, and even Beethoven brought into focus traditional forms, soaring melodies, and rich harmonies. Depending on who is talking, **Piano Trio No. 1 in B Major, Op. 8** is said to be the best of Brahms’ more than twenty-four works for chamber ensembles. It was written first in 1854 when he was twenty-one. Brahms, the conductor/pianist, toured frequently around Europe. On his travels, he met Joseph Joachim, a leading violinist who became a close friend, and composer/performers Robert and Clara Schumann. These musicians surely encouraged him in his writing of the Piano Trio the first time around. After he had completed his fourth and final symphony, Brahms set about to revise his Piano Trio No. 1 in 1889 (the same year North Dakota became a state). He trimmed one-third off the youthful earlier version and lengthened the finale. The movements can be briefly described as follows:

I. *Allegro con moto* - This movement in B Major is in sonata form (two themes stated, developed and then returned.) The movement opens with a broad, expressive piano theme which is joined by the cello. A second theme is also introduced by the piano, and together the trio builds to a climax. The themes return with the strings playing the first theme in unison.

II. *Scherzo* - Brahms kept this movement almost the same in the revision. The pace flits along in B minor with forte outbursts and whispered responses. The Trio section begins warmly and becomes more high-spirited toward its end. The Scherzo returns with a short coda.

III. *Adagio* - This section has three parts with a very rich texture. The opening is notable for a dialogue between the piano and string responses. The *Adagio* ends quietly in B major.

IV. *Finale* - The cello begins with an agitated theme. The second theme is stated forcefully by the piano with cello offbeats. The piece ends in B minor.

“**American Mirror**,” written in 2018 by Los Angeles-based composer Derrick Skye, and “**As I Walked Out**,” written in 2024 by the Danish String Quartet folk collective from their “Keel Road” album, represent current stylings of modern string quartet composition. Composers today use great contrasts of texture (single instrument, harmonized instruments, and/or polyphonic voices, striking the wood, playing in octaves or doubling the same part), three quartertone sharps for pitches, and non-traditional or flexible forms.

Composer **Derrick Skye** (b. 1982) chooses elements of various global cultures to create his unique works. He has studied Persian and Balkan music theory, tala (or rhythmic beat from hand-clapping or other instrument strikes) in Indian music and West African music and dance. As a trombonist and percussionist, he uses rhythm as a frequent theme. His list of works includes pieces which accompany choreography and even synchronized swimming, as well as compositions for orchestra, wind ensemble, film, choir, and chamber music. Professionally, he is the artistic director of the chamber ensemble and arts organization “Bridge to Everywhere” and serves as composer for the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra. “American Mirror” is in two sections, of which we are presenting Part 1.

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## Program Notes (continued)

Our final work, “As I Walked Out,” is a traditional English song arranged by the Norwegian cellist **Fredrik Schøyen Sjölin** of the Danish String Quartet. This acclaimed ensemble presents traditional classical repertoire, as well as folk music (especially Scandinavian), contemporary, and original works. In 2019, they received a Grammy Award for Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance. Since this arrangement has no vocal line, you might imagine it as a soundtrack to an outdoor adventure.

- Notes by Rhonda Gowen

### LAURA PROKOPYK, *Violin*

Laura Prokopyk has performed across the U.S. and Canada—from Calgary to Carnegie Hall to Florida—as soloist, chamber musician, recitalist, artist-in-residence, concertmaster, and even band member for Ray Price. Before moving to Bismarck, she served as Concertmaster of the Grammy-winning Cleveland Chamber Symphony, recording works by Robert Erickson, Augusta Read Thomas, and Virko Baley. She has been Concertmaster of the Bismarck-Mandan Symphony, guest concertmaster in Grand Forks and Minot, and a guest artist at the UNLV Las Vegas Music Festival. She holds Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees from the Cleveland Institute of Music, studying with David and Linda Cerone, Joseph Gingold, and Jascha Brodsky.

### DR. ERIK ANDERSON, *Cello*

Erik Anderson is a cellist, bassist, conductor, arranger, and teacher whose thoughtful musicianship engages audiences of all ages. Whether speaking in classrooms, offering preconcert lectures, or performing across the Great Plains and Europe, he brings curiosity, respect for the music, and a passion for education. He performs regularly with pianist Dianna Anderson, recently presenting five programs pairing Beethoven sonatas with 20th-century works, and is a founding member of Minot State University’s *Luminus* faculty trio. His work ranges from electric-cello performances of “Concerto Nova” to directing Dakota Chamber Music, a nationally recognized summer institute for strings and piano. He holds degrees from the University of Idaho and University of Cincinnati.

### DR. EUNAE LEE, *Piano*

Dr. EunAe Lee began her musical training at Yewon Arts School and Seoul Arts High School in Korea, making her solo debut at 14 with SaintSaëns’ Piano Concerto No. 2 and the Seoul Philharmonic. After success in major national competitions, she moved to the United States in 2004 to enter Juilliard’s joint degree program with Martin Canin and later earned an Artist Diploma at Mannes under Richard Goode. A laureate of several international competitions, she has performed in leading venues including Alice Tully Hall and the Kennedy Center. Dr. Lee is Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Mary.

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