This performance is made possible in part by the generous support from the Joy S. Shinkoskey Series of Noon Concerts endowment.

The Department of Music presents
Shinkoskey Noon Concert

Gold Coast Trio
Rachel Vetter Huang, violin
Susan Lamb Cook, cello
Hao Huang, piano

Program

Piano Trio in C Major, op. 87
Allegro
Andante con moto
Scherzo – Presto
Finale – Allegro giocoso

Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano
Allegro con brio
Lento
Presto

Johannes Brahms
Ellen Taaffe Zwilich
(1833–97)
(b. 1938)

Thursday, April 14, 2011 • 12:05 pm
Room 115, Music Building

We ask that you be courteous to your fellow audience members and the performers. Please turn off your cell phones and refrain from texting. Audience members who are distracting to their neighbors or the performers in any way may be asked to leave at any time.

Also, this performance is being professionally recorded for the university archive. Photography, audio, or audiovisual recording is prohibited during the performance.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Originally founded as resident chamber ensemble of the Classical Music Festival in Eisenstadt, Austria, the Gold Coast Trio, with violinist Rachel Vetter Huang, cellist Susan Lamb Cook, and pianist Hao Huang, has been hailed for its richly expressive and emotionally powerful performances. Featured at the Lake Tahoe Music Festival in the Beethoven Triple Concerto with the Reno Philharmonic, the Gold Coast Trio has thrilled audiences both in the USA and abroad. Their performance at the Liszt Concert Hall in Raiding, Austria was featured on Austrian National Television, and they have presented concerts and master classes in the city of Xiamen, China. The Gold Coast Trio has appeared at the Haydnfestspiele, Eisenstadt, and the Bessie Bartlett Frankel Festival of Chamber Music at Scripps College. Their concerts have been broadcast on Capital Public Radio, and the trio has released a CD of works by Beethoven, Beach, Bernstein, and Piazzolla.

Violinist Rachel Vetter Huang has appeared as a concerto soloist with the Boston Pops, Concord Symphony Orchestra, and others. She has been featured as a guest artist for national conferences of the International Society for Music Education, the College Music Society, and the Music Teachers National Association and has released a CD of works by American romantic composers for VSA. Dr. Rachel Huang holds degrees from Harvard University and the State University of New York at Stony Brook and is currently on the faculty of Scripps College and Claremont Graduate University.

Susan Lamb Cook, UC Davis Faculty Affiliate in Cello and Chamber Music, has performed as soloist as well as chamber musician in Austria, Italy, Germany, Hungary, Egypt, and the United States. She serves as principal cellist for the Classical Music Festival in Eisenstadt, Austria, is on faculty for the Vianden International Music Festival in Luxembourg, and is program director and coach for the Sacramento Youth Symphony’s Summer Chamber Music Workshop. She holds a Bachelor of Music and a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Iowa, as well as a performance degree from the Hochschule für Musik in Vienna, and has recorded works for cello and piano by Rachmaninov, as well as chamber music by American composer Daniel Kingman for Innova Recordings.

A four-time United States Information Agency Artistic Ambassador, pianist Dr. Hao Huang has gained critical acclaim in the Middle East, Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America. He was a featured performer of the George Enescu International Music Festival and the Barcelona Cultural Olympiad and has performed as a concerto soloist with the Brevard Music Center Orchestra, the Timisoara “Banatul” Philharmonic, the New Haven Symphony Orchestra and others. A graduate of Harvard University, the Juilliard School, and SUNY at Stony Brook, Dr. Huang is currently professor of music and artist-in-residence at Scripps College and Claremont Graduate University.
The Scherzo is a grim and shadowy C minor—not the joke that the word “scherzo” would lead us to expect. The predominant dynamic is pianissimo, drawing forth the utmost delicacy and control from all three players. When the following Trio section moves into the sunshine of C major, the effect is stunning. Brahms was chary about using the word “scherzo” in his scores; but when he did, the effect is often driving and muscular. Two themes come into play in this sonata-rondo: the first is impassioned and identified with the duple meter of the preceding section before slipping into the quiet afterglow of the coda.

The Piano Trio in C Major finds the forty-nine-year-old Brahms at the apogee of his compositional powers. Each movement is rich in melodic material, which the composer expands, varies, and transforms. Throughout much of the piece the piano part has such a heroic character that the two string instruments band together to counter its effect, playing in octaves or in the same rhythms. The main theme of the first movement is so perfectly conceived for the strings that they play it at each of the major formal statements in the sonata-form movement, until the last statement that is made by the exuberant piano. The sedate second theme is announced by the piano over a rippling accompaniment figure; in true developmental style, Brahms turns this figure into a third subject. A climactic return to the tonic leads us to expect a repeat of the exposition but instead moves into the expansive development. The development is stormy and expansive; Brahms pours out thematic transformations and variations. A traditional recapitulation and expansive coda conclude the movement.

The Andante con moto consists of a theme and five variations in the key of A minor. The strings present the main theme, a gypsylike melody of marked Hungarian flavor set against an accompaniment of chords played on the offbeat in the piano. As the movement unwinds, it turns out that the original theme is in fact a double theme. Following three variations in A minor on the melody originally presented by the strings, the fourth turns to A major and develops the accompaniment figure from the piano in rich harmonic elaboration. The last variation returns to the minor mode but converts the original theme into the 6/8 meter of the preceding section before slipping into the quiet afterglow of the coda.

Brahms enjoyed spending his summers in locales of natural beauty that acted as places of inspiration. During the early 1880s his favorite resort was Bad Ischl, amid the breathtaking mountain scenery of the Salzkammergut, renowned especially as the summer residence of Emperor Franz Joseph. It was in Ischl in 1882 that Brahms completed two major chamber compositions—the magisterial Trio in C Major and the joyous String Quintet in F Major.

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Ellen Taaffe Zwilich is notable for a number of significant firsts. A student of Elliott Carter and Roger Sessions, she was the first woman to receive a doctorate in music composition (1975) from the Juilliard School. Eight years later she became the first woman to receive a Pulitzer Prize in music, for her Symphony No. 1. She was awarded the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Chamber Music Prize, the Arturo Toscanini Music Critics Award, an Academy Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and four Grammy nominations. In 1995 she was named to the first Composer’s Chair in the history of Carnegie Hall.

Zwilich has stated: “Many of my favorite works for piano trio are, in effect, duos in which the two strings together balance the piano. In the interest of formal and aesthetic balance, I took a somewhat similar approach. I also decided to exploit the difference in the essence of strings and keyboard, allowing some musical material to arise from the nature of the piano and some to be generated by the nature of the string instruments. Most often the material is then taken up and re-interpreted by the other family; sometimes the musical material is not exchanged, but forms the basis for a dialogue with the other. Ultimately, however, the piano, violin and cello are partners, three equal voices of exploration.” Her Piano Trio was written in 1987 for Joseph Kalichstein, Jamie Laredo, and Sharon Robinson, to whom the work is dedicated.

Peter Goldstein has written: “Fully representative of Ms. Zwilich’s work, the trio traces its roots to the ‘organically’ developing music championed by Beethoven and his successors. The first movement, marked Allegro con brio, is fashioned out of a restricted pool of motivic materials, proclaimed at the outset in an arch-like melody presented two octaves apart by the cello and violin in vigorous sixteenth notes. . . . The texture of the music is punctuated by starts and stops, deliberate silences that contribute to the climactic waves that characterize this intensely dramatic movement. The ensuing Lento is spun out of the materials of the first movement. A motive found in the sustained melodies played individually by the piano and strings in the Allegro con brio . . . resurfaces in the second movement as a lament. . . . The Lento frequently juxtaposes or alternates the minor and major thirds above the tonic, creating a dissonance that provides a fitting accompaniment to the lamenting three-note figure. Not surprisingly, the materials of the Presto finale are further developments of the motivic and rhythmic substance explored in the previous two movements. Now, however, repeated rhythmic figures and melodic motives are no longer driven to obsessive or lamentational ends, but are directed to the creation of music with the energetic and sometimes raucous ebullience of a vigorous dance. Silence is used to the same expressive ends as in the previous two movements, usually as a cessation of activity before a wind-up to ever-heightening climaxes.”