

Musica Viva!



Treble Logo—Marilyn Banner

THE MILO TRIO
Music of the modern era
Washington Musica Viva
Sunday, December 15
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THE MILO TRIO

Carl Banner, piano
Celaya Kirchner, violin
Emma Hays Johnson, cello

The seventh of the Milo Trio's series of concerts examining the development of the piano trio genre, takes us still further into the twentieth century, with two of its more prolific composers, Dmitri Shostakovich and Bohoslav Martinů.

The final program in this series of concerts will take place at Banner Arts on January 12, 2020, featuring music by three American composers, George Walker, Dorothy Rudd Walker and Victoria Bond.

PROGRAM

Bohuslav Martinů

(Dec. 8, 1890—Aug. 28, 1959)

Piano Trio #2 in D minor (1950)

- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Andante
- III. Allegro

Dmitri Shostakovich

(Sept. 25, 1906—Aug. 9, 1975)

Piano Trio #2 in E minor (1944)

- I. Andante
- II. Allegro con brio
- III. Largo
- IV. Allegretto

PROGRAM NOTES

Martinů, Piano Trio #2: The seed of Bohoslav Martinů's tumultuous life can be traced back to the unusual settings of his birth and childhood. The Bohemian composer was born at the top of the church tower of the small market town of Policka, where his father doubled as fire lookout and church-bell ringer. The isolation experienced in the tower contributed to Martinů's elusive character, his mercurial and unmethodical tendencies, and his predisposition for depression. The ample horizons he could admire from the height of his first residence indelibly colored his musical language, characterized by syncopated, sprung rhythms and the superimposition of closely spaced harmonies that seem born of a desire to fill vast spaces.

Expelled from the Prague Conservatory in 1910 for "incorrigible negligence," Martinů went on to a life of travels, short-held teaching posts, and extramarital love affairs. As a second violinist with the Czech Philharmonic, he traveled Europe, eventually settling in Paris, where

he studied composition with Roussel. In the French capital he heard jazz and the music of Stravinsky and Les Six. He composed copiously and frantically, covering all genres of the classical repertoire and showing interest in Baroque forms, as well as in the folk music and culture of his native Czechoslovakia.



A brief sojourn in Switzerland and one year spent assisting artists to escape Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia preceded Martinů's 1940 flight to the United States. Life in New York proved unsuited for the European-minded composer. Martinů entered a period of deep depression, aggravated by a bad fall he incurred while teaching at Tanglewood. Nevertheless, in 1948 he accepted teaching posts at Princeton and the Mannes School of Music.

It is during this time that, in just a few weeks, he composed the Piano Trio No. 2 in D minor (1950). His interest in a variety of compositional methods and traditions earned him a reputation for eclecticism. In fact, Martinů never associated with any particular school, finding his own voice in the synthesis of the most diverse influences. Though the Piano Trio No. 2 radiates the shining energy that characterizes most of Martinů's music, an underlying heaviness colors this lively piece. The thickness of the string writing in the first movement, Allegro, is reminiscent of Schumann's chamber music, while the motivic development references Beethoven. The Andante opens with a modernist rendering of a folk chromatic line, complicated by the piano's initial refusal to follow the strings' melodic drive. Noteworthy is the bell-like piano mini-chorale towards the center of this movement. The final Allegro is a fantastic ride, a tour-de-

force dialog between the piano and the strings, brilliant in energy and dynamics, yet unwilling to mask completely the underlying anxiety that pervades the whole piece.

Martinů left the United States in 1953 to return to Europe, first settling in Paris, then in Nice. In 1955 he again tried a life in New York, but, depressed, accepted a teaching post in Rome and one year later moved to Switzerland, where he died of stomach cancer in 1959.

Barbara Moroncini

Shostakovich, Piano Trio #2: Dmitri Shostakovich, born and raised in St. Petersburg, studied at its fabled Conservatory in the aftermath of World War I and the Russian Revolutions of 1917. His teachers there included Leonid Nikolayev (piano) and Maximilian Steinberg (composition). With the premiere of his graduation piece, the First Symphony, in 1926, Shostakovich's exceptional career was launched. He quickly established himself at the forefront of young Soviet composers.



Shostakovich was fortunate in attracting some of the most gifted performers of the era — Yevgeny Mravinsky, David Oistrakh, and Mstislav Rostropovich among them — as ardent champions of his music. In his last years, he turned increasingly from large-scale "public" works to music of confessional intimacy, concentrating on the genre of string quartet and vocal music.

A highly politicized figure during his lifetime and since — because of a high-profile career carved out in the conditions of Communist dictatorship coupled with the immense emotive power of his music — by the time of his widely-celebrated centennial in 2006 Shostakovich was hailed by common consensus as one of the greatest twentieth-century composers. A substantial body of his large and varied musical output has established itself firmly in the standard repertory.

THE MILO TRIO

The Milo trio was formed in 2018 by Carl Banner, Celaya Kirchner and Emma Hayes Johnson, under the auspices of Washington Musica Viva, of which Carl Banner is the executive director. The group came together when Bonnie Thron, principal cellist with the North Carolina Symphony, and occasional participant in Musica Viva programs, introduced her fellow cellist, Emma Johnson, to Banner, who in turn introduced her close friend Celaya Kirchner to him. Johnson suggested that they form a trio and the group held their first concert on January 27, 2019, in the home of Richard White, who resides on Milo Avenue in Bethesda, thus the trio gained its name.

A musician since childhood, pianist Carl Banner studied with, among others, Harold Zbrack, Leon Fleisher, Leo Smit, and Leonard Shure, and performed in numerous solo and chamber concerts from the age of 14. In 1964 he was the winner of the Washington, DC, National Society of Arts and Letters Scholarship Award in piano. He continued to perform regularly while earning a PhD in cell biology from Harvard University in 1982. In 1998 he and his wife, artist Marilyn Banner, founded Washington Musica Viva, which to date has produced more than 300 chamber music concerts in the Washington DC area and elsewhere. In 2004, Banner retired from the National Institutes of Health in order to devote full time to music. With Musica Viva, he has produced concerts at the Embassies of the Czech Republic, Germany, Austria, Lithuania, Denmark, Israel, and the European Union, as well as at the Kennedy Center, New York's Czech Center, and the Donnell Library. He has also performed at the Wellfleet Preservation Hall and Public Library in Wellfleet, MA, where his father, Paul, is a long-time resident.

Cellist Emma Hayes Johnson currently resides near the DC and Baltimore areas after recently finishing her second master's degree under the tutelage of Edward Arron at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. In addition to freelancing, Emma has been a member of several notable orchestras including the Spartanburg Philharmonic Orchestra and the American Festival Pops Orchestra. Her most recent performances include solo and chamber recitals and tours in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Virginia, and the Carolinas as well as France and Sri Lanka. As a chamber musician, she has worked alongside Xiao-Dong Wang, Hye-Jin Kim, Ara Gregorian, Colin Carr, Emanuel Gruber, and Raman Ramakrishnan. Prior to her engagements in

Massachusetts, she held the position of adjunct professor at Beaufort County Community College in North Carolina while also maintaining a private studio and freelancing. Emma studied at Converse College and George Mason University under the tutelage of Kenneth Law, and she graduated with her first Master's degree from East Carolina University under the instruction of Emanuel Gruber.

Celaya Kirchner currently resides in Northern Virginia after receiving her Masters in Violin Performance from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst under the tutelage of renowned pedagogue Elizabeth Chang. There she received a string quartet fellowship, performing four chamber music recitals and playing in masterclasses for members of the Cleveland Quartet, Ying Quartet, and Dover Quartet as well as many others. For her undergraduate degree, Ms. Kirchner studied with David Salness, of the Left Bank Quartet, at the University of Maryland. She also attended numerous summer chamber music festivals, including Green Mountain Chamber Music Festival, Bowdoin International Music Festival, Meadowmount School of Music, and Apple Hill Center for Chamber Music. In the summer of 2018, Ms. Kirchner travelled to Piobbico, Italy to participate in the Brancaloni International Music Festival, performing in a 13th century castle as well as in other venues in the Marche region. Ms. Kirchner also enjoys orchestral playing, regularly performing with the Mid-Atlantic Symphony Orchestra as well as participating in the National Orchestral Institute and Festival. In her teaching, Ms. Kirchner likes to focus on establishing a good technical foundation while also establishing skills for musical expression. Because why learn all of this technique if we don't use it to express ourselves? Ms. Kirchner also hopes to impart onto her students her passion for chamber music and the importance of learning chamber music skills.

Marilyn Banner. Marilyn is the artist whose music-related paintings grace the cover of these programs. She is a rising star among the artists who work in the "encaustic medium" in the DC area. Spend a little time browsing her works on her



web site at marilynbanner.com. Marilyn has participated in many individual as well as juried shows of her work, in the DC area and in New York. Also, her work is featured in the

Washington Musica Viva produces high quality, unpretentious public performances of a broad range of classical, jazz-based, and contemporary chamber music. WMV began as a monthly multi-disciplinary performance series in the Kensington studio of visual artist Marilyn Banner. Now in our 21st season, WMV has produced more than 300 programs, including performances at the Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage, the Czech Center in NY, the Embassy of the Czech Republic, the Embassy of Austria, Busboys and Poets, Twins Jazz Club, and the Brooklyn Conservatory. WMV is directed by pianist Carl Banner. Participants include professional musicians from Washington, Baltimore, New York, and elsewhere.

Washington Musica Viva, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization, and all contributions are fully tax-deductible. WMV can be reached at 301-891-6844 or dcmusicaviva@verizon.net.

Program notes and composer pictures are adapted from material available online. Where available, names of original authors are provided with the text.

Program design by Hugh Haskell

Suggestions for improvement are welcome at haskellh@verizon.net.