

PRESENTS



Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center
Stephanie Blythe, mezzo-soprano
American Voices

A Raley's and Bel Air Concert Series Event

Friday, April 24, 2009 • 8 pm

Jackson Hall, Mondavi Center, UC Davis

Individual support provided by Barbara K. Jackson

There will be one intermission.

Pre-performance Lecture: Chris Reynolds, Musicologist, Department of Music, UC Davis
Studio Theatre, Mondavi Center • 7 pm

Raley's and **BEL AIR**

The artists and your fellow audience members appreciate silence during the performance. Please be sure that you have switched off cellular phones, watch alarms, and pager signals. Videotaping, photographing, and audio recording are strictly forbidden. Violators are subject to removal.

THE CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER

David Finckel and Wu Han, *Artistic Directors*

Stephanie Blythe, *mezzo-soprano*

Warren Jones, *piano*

Anne-Marie McDermott, *piano*

Lily Francis, *violin*

Ani Kavafian, *violin*

Paul Neubauer, *viola*

Priscilla Lee, *cello*

American Voices

Trio in D Minor for Two Violins and Cello, Op. 3, No. 2

John Antes

Allegro

Andante un poco adagio

Presto

Francis, Kavafian, Lee

*Vignettes: Covered Wagon Woman (from the
Daily Journal of Margaret Ann Alsip Frink, 1850)*

Alan Louis Smith

The Allure of the West (instrumental)

Prologue to the Journal

There's a Lady

Considerable Excitement

The Face of the Earth

Buffalo Chase

The Sioux Tribe and the "White Squaw"

Lost Boy

Upon Them She Depended

The Mountain

Margaret's Dream (instrumental)

Here We Are

Epilogue to the Journal

Blythe, Jones, Kavafian, Lee

Intermission

Lullaby for String Quartet

George Gershwin

Kavafian, Francis, Neubauer, Lee

Quintet in F-sharp Minor for Piano and Strings, Op. 67

Amy Cheney Beach

Adagio – Allegro moderato

Adagio espressivo

Allegro agitato

McDermott, Kavafian, Francis, Neubauer, Lee

PROGRAM NOTES

Trio in D Minor for Two Violins and Cello, Op. 3, No. 2

John Antes

(Born March 24, 1740, in Frederick, Pennsylvania; died December 17, 1811, in Bristol, England)

John Antes, born in a tiny Moravian farming community in Pennsylvania, received an excellent general education and his only formal training in music as a youth. In 1764, Antes went for further religious training to the Moravians' mother settlement at Herrnhut, 40 miles east of Dresden; the following year he moved to the Rhineland town of Neuwied to learn watchmaking. He was ordained as a minister in 1769 and early the next year became one of the first American Christian missionaries in Egypt. He was finally relieved from those foreign duties in 1781, when he returned first to Herrnhut and two years later to Neuwied; in 1785, he was assigned as treasurer to the Fulneck Moravian community in West Yorkshire, England. The 45-year-old Antes married later that year and thereafter applied himself to such mechanical projects as devising a music stand that turned pages by depressing a foot pedal, building a weaver's loom, and suggesting improvements not just to the common door lock but also to piano hammers, violin bows, and the tuning mechanism for violins and violas. In 1808, Antes and his wife retired to Bristol, where he died three years later.

The Three Trios, Op. 3, apparently written in Egypt around 1780, are Antes' only known secular music. Though both the missing earlier opus numbers and a detailed letter that he sent on July 10, 1779, to the musically inclined Benjamin Franklin (whom he had met in Philadelphia 16 years before) indicate that he also composed at least a half-dozen string quartets, these have never been found. Antes' Trio No. 2 is a remarkable achievement for a sometime-composer with little formal training who lived his life in the musical hinterlands; it is a loss that Antes left such a tiny musical legacy.

The careful balancing of the three parts, with the violins paired equally and the cello both carrying the bass and participating in the motivic discussion, is evident from the outset. The first and last of the three movements unfold largely within the sonata-form model that Antes' better-known European contemporaries were still perfecting. They begin their expositions in a dark minor mode before moving to brighter tonal climes, creating a drive for resolution through the surprisingly spacious development sections, and achieving satisfying formal closure with the return of the opening themes in the recapitulations. Expressive and formal balance is provided for the outer movements by a gently lyrical and finely crafted *Andante*.

Vignettes: Covered Wagon Woman (from the Daily Journal of Margaret Ann Alsip Frink, 1850) for Mezzo-Soprano, Piano, Violin, and Cello

Alan Louis Smith

(Born October 21, 1955, in McAllen, Texas)

Alan Louis Smith is one of this country's most highly regarded collaborative pianists and teachers and a composer of growing reputation. Smith earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in piano performance at Baylor University and his doctorate in piano chamber music and vocal accompanying at the University of Michigan, where his principal mentor was the renowned accompanist Martin Katz. Smith has held faculty appointments at Howard Payne University, the University of Michigan, Baylor University, and, since 1989, the Thornton School of Music at the University of Southern California, where he was named Chair of Keyboard Studies in 2003. He has also served for 19 years as a member of the vocal coaching faculty of the Tanglewood Music Center and is now Coordinator of the Piano Program, for which he holds the Marian Douglas Martin Master Teacher Chair.

The composer has provided the following information about *Vignettes: Covered Wagon Woman*: "When Margaret Frink crossed the American continent in a covered wagon with her husband in 1850 it had only been 46 years since Lewis and Clark had begun their famous journey into the uncharted West with their Corps of Discovery and less than a year since the beginning of the California Gold Rush. Mrs. Frink and her husband, Ledyard, set out upon their journey from Indiana to Sacramento, California, along with a young boy named Robert, who was 11 years old at the time of the crossing, and a young man named Aaron Rose, who was not yet 21 and who for three years had been a clerk in the mercantile store owned by Mr. Frink and Mrs. Frink's brother, A. B. Alsip, in Martinsville, Indiana.

"Mrs. Frink's remarkable diary reveals her adventurous spirit, her deep love for those in her care, as well as her perspicacious and resourceful ability to provide for herself and her family through a combination of shrewd bargaining and alliances with those with whom she came in contact on their journey westward. She was generous and big-hearted toward people in need and in distress along the trail, sometimes giving the last of whatever she possessed in order to help someone.

"My single goal in setting these marvelous texts to music was to be honest to the words, to the inherent emotions; to illuminate where appropriate and to stay out of the way when that was what was called for. One of the great pleasures of composing music for Stephanie Blythe is that she loves words, their meanings, their sounds, their emotional and dramatic impact. I know that she, at any given moment, will zero in on the core meaning of what she is singing, so my 'job' was to set the vocal lines in such a way that I would not impede her communication, but encourage it. Most of the text is set syllabically (one syllable to one note) for clarity of understanding. Occasionally I wrote some runs in the vocal line to illustrate a particular idea such as the buffalo chase, knowing that Stephanie is no stranger to florid runs with all of her success in Baroque operas. Likewise it was a great pleasure to write the piano part for Warren Jones, knowing that he would instinctively find the full meaning of what was intended as well as imbue the musical meaning with his terrific musical imagination and splendid pianism.

“Of the two string parts the cello has the larger role. There is a reason for this—in many cases the cello part represents Mr. Frink. Though we do not hear from him directly in words via the diary, the cello as employed in the song cycle often is a representation of his inner thoughts and feelings. The violin part most often represents the inner thoughts and feelings of Mrs. Frink. Since her words are heard much of the time, the commentary of the violin part on her inner thoughts is not copious. From time to time the strings represent pictorial ideas such as running buffalo, the braying of mules, or the back-and-forth motion of rocking chairs; at those times their musical illustration is absolutely equal in importance.

“The pitch ‘A’ provides an important musical reference point for the songs. The cycle begins on that note in both the piano and cello parts and it appears at other prominent moments in the group of songs, most notably in *Margaret’s Dream*, the eleventh part of the cycle, which is written for the instruments alone. Over a chordal piano accompaniment the violin sustains a long, high A that represents the huge distance of Mrs. Frink’s journey from both a physical and an emotional perspective. After a turbulent middle section, the long A returns, this time in the cello (Mr. Frink’s inner state of being), while the violin sings a soaring descant. Even the shape of the letter A, with its two “feet” rising to a midpoint reminds me in an abstract way of the famous arch in St. Louis, that city being an important setting-off point for many westward travelers. The shape of the St. Louis arch describes the metal hoops on the covered wagons that held the canvas tarps in place. Just so, the note A describes the length of Mrs. Frink’s journey with one ‘foot’ in her Indiana home and the other firmly fixed in her destination in California, with the height and grandeur of mountain ranges in between.

“One other important aural landmark that recurs frequently throughout the set of songs is heard in the very opening in the piano part. It is a shimmering chord in close harmony with added chord tones at the intervals of a ninth and an eleventh. The chord vibrates with harmonic possibility, just as the Frinks’ hearts and minds must have vibrated with the possibilities for what was ahead of them in their journey. The chord is arpeggiated in the very opening, but even when it is played as a block chord, as it is at many places in the cycle, it is luminescent like the shimmering allure of gold.

“Listeners may find it interesting to know that the opening tune in the seventh song, *The Sioux Tribe and the ‘White Squaw,’* is a traditional Sioux melody that I found in a book of melodies for the native wooden flute. It is played by the cello in harmonics in order to impart the flavor of the native instrument.

“The overall shape of the song cycle is such that the longest song, No. 10, *The Mountain*, arrives at the point of the Golden Mean and builds in intensity in the same way that Mrs. Frink describes the fierce exertion of humans and animals in reaching the top of the mountain. The song occupies a special place in the scope of the set of songs, just as the experience depicted by Mrs. Frink occupies a remarkable moment in the span of their journey. *Margaret’s Dream*, the piece that follows *The Mountain*, stems from my own imagination, not from the diary, and portrays both the bliss and anxiety of following her and her husband’s dream to emigrate to the West.”

Visit The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center events page at MondaviArts.org for additional text and notes for *Vignettes: Covered Wagon Woman (from the Daily Journal of Margaret Ann Alsip Frink, 1850)*.

Lullaby for String Quartet

George Gershwin

(Born September 26, 1898, in Brooklyn, New York; died July 11, 1937, in Hollywood, California)

George Gershwin joined the Tin Pan Alley firm of Remick in 1914 (at the tender age of 16) as a “song plugger,” a pianist who played through the latest sheet music issues for any interested customer. He quickly became familiar with the most popular styles of the day and was soon composing his own music—the piano rag *Rialto Ripples* dates from 1917, and his first hit, *Swanee*, was written in mid-1918 and introduced in a revue at the opening of the Capitol Theatre on Broadway on October 24, 1919. Even from those earliest years, however, Gershwin hoped to become more than just another dispenser of pop tunes, and in August 1919, he began two years of formal study of harmony, counterpoint, and form with the Hungarian-born composer Edward Kilenyi, Sr. In addition to his regular exercises for Kilenyi, in 1919, he wrote a little string quartet piece in a gentle, slow blues style that the young composer called *Lullaby*.

Quintet in F-sharp Minor for Piano and Strings, Op. 67

Amy Cheney Beach

(Born September 5, 1867, in Henniker, New Hampshire; died December 27, 1944, in New York City)

In this land of pioneers, Amy Beach stood tall among the artistic avant-garde—the most prominent female American composer of her day, one of the leading keyboard artists during the years around World War I, the first native woman composer to earn recognition abroad, the first woman musician to receive her entire professional training in this country, the first to write a symphony. Born Amy Cheney to a family of colonial descent, she received her earliest instruction on piano from her mother, began composing melodies at four, and gave her debut recital a year later, at which she played some waltzes of her own invention. In 1875, when she was eight, the family moved to Boston, where Amy pursued studies in piano and theory. On October 23, 1883, she made her public debut with orchestra in Boston in works by Moscheles and Chopin, and pursued a successful career as a soloist for the following two years. In December 1885, Cheney married the prominent Boston surgeon Henry Harris Aubrey Beach, and thereafter referred to herself exclusively in the Victorian fashion as “Mrs. H.H.A. Beach” (initials only). Dr. Beach, an excellent amateur musician, encouraged his wife to cultivate her gift as a composer, and she began receiving notice from the musical establishment for her works. Her *Gaelic Symphony*, premiered by Emil Paur and the Boston Symphony in 1896, was the first such work to be written by an American woman. Following the death of her husband in 1910, Amy Beach resumed an active concert career. She died from a heart attack in 1944 at age 77.

Beach wrote her Quintet for Piano and Strings in 1907, near the end of the years of her marriage when she had devoted herself largely to composition. A slow, largely meditative introduction prefaces the sonata form of the opening movement. The music pauses and then the tempo quickens for the main theme, a smooth, somber melody presented by the violin; the second theme, in a brighter tonality, is given in the piano’s tenor register. Ethereal, sustained string unisons recalled from the introduction bridge to the development section, which treats both of the movement’s themes. The strings, again in unison, begin the recapitulation with a broad but shortened version of the main subject above the piano’s muscular accompaniment; the

It was also featured in a special television program, *Vignettes: An Evening with Stephanie Blythe and Warren Jones*, presented on *Opera New York*. Last season, she premiered and recorded another piece by Alan Smith, *Covered Wagon Woman*, which was commissioned for her residency with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. This season she performs the piece again with Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center on tour throughout the U.S.

Stephanie Blythe's most recent solo recordings include a collection of pieces by Mahler, Brahms, and Wagner and an album of Handel and Bach arias released on the Virgin Classics label. Blythe was recently named *Musical America's* Vocalist of the Year for 2009. Her other awards include the *Opera News* Award (2007) and the Richard Tucker Award (1999).

The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (CMS), founded in 1969, is one of 12 constituents of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the largest performing arts complex in the world. Along with other constituents such as the New York Philharmonic, New York City Ballet, Lincoln Center Theater, and the Metropolitan Opera, the Chamber Music Society has its home at Lincoln Center, in Alice Tully Hall. Through its performance, education, and recording/broadcast activities, CMS draws more people to chamber music than any other organization of its kind.

CMS presents annual series of concerts and educational events for listeners ranging from connoisseurs to chamber music newcomers of all ages. Performing repertoire from three centuries, and numerous premieres by living composers, CMS offers programs curated to provide listeners a comprehensive perspective on the art of chamber music. The performing artists of the Chamber Music Society, a multi-generational selection of expert chamber musicians, constitute an evolving repertory company capable of presenting chamber music of every instrumentation, style, and historical period. Its annual activities include a full season of concerts, national and international tours, nationally televised broadcasts on *Live from Lincoln Center*, a radio show broadcast nationwide, and regular appearances on American Public Media's *Performance Today*.

The Chamber Music Society recently launched its first ever in-house recording label, CMS Studio Recordings. Its mission is to capture selected CMS performances under optimal recording conditions using the latest audiophile technology, offering recordings of the highest possible quality. In the short time the label has been in existence, it has released three titles to critical acclaim. CMS also has recordings on the Deutsche Grammophon, SONY Classical, Telarc, Musical Heritage Society, MusicMasters, Omega Record Classics, Arabesque, and Delos labels.

In 2004, CMS appointed cellist David Finckel and pianist Wu Han artistic directors. They succeed founding director Charles Wadsworth (1969-89), Fred Sherry (1989-93), and David Shifrin (1993-2004). Visit the Chamber Music Society online at www.ChamberMusicSociety.org.

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Vignettes: Covered Wagon Woman was commissioned by Music Accord for Stephanie Blythe, Warren Jones, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

Texts from Mrs. Frink's journal are available online at: www.MondaviArts.org/journal. The texts from Mrs. Frink's journal are used with the kind acknowledgement of Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

From *Covered Wagon Women: Dairies and Letters from the Western Trails, 1865*, edited by Kenneth L. Holmes, by permission of the University of Nebraska Press
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