



**Programme Notes**  
**The Streeton Trio**  
**Sunday August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 2.30 pm**



**The Streeton Trio - Emma Jardine (violin) · Umberto Clerici (cello) · Benjamin Kopp (piano)**

**Programme**

*Joseph Haydn: Trio in G Hob XV/25 (1795)*

*Harry Sdraulig: Joybox (2017)*

*Paul Schoenfeld: Café Music (1985)*

*Fazil Say: Space Jump opus 46 (2012)*

*Maurice Ravel: Piano Trio (1914)*

## **The Streeton Trio**

Described by Musica Viva as “Australia’s most internationally successful piano trio”, The Streeton Trio was formed in 2008, in Geneva, Switzerland, by three young Australian musicians. Named after the Australian Impressionist painter, Sir Arthur Streeton, the Trio has consistently received wide acclaim for its performances in such venues as the Wigmore Hall (London), Het Loo Royal Palace (The Netherlands), Shanghai Oriental Arts Centre, Melbourne Recital Centre, Trondheim Festival (Norway), Apeldoorn Festival (The Netherlands) and Pablo Casals Festival (Prades, Spain).

## **Competitions and Awards**

In 2010, The Streeton Trio was selected to be a part of the prestigious European Chamber Music Academy, where it was in residence for three years. Now based in Sydney, the Trio has studied intensively with the world’s leading chamber musicians such as Gabor Takacs-Nagy, Hatto Beyerle, Avedis Kouyoumdjian, Johannes Meissl, Ferenc Rados, Erich Höbarth, Pascal Devoyon and Mihaela Martin.

The Streeton Trio was winner of the 2011 Music Viva Chamber Music Competition in Melbourne, and has been laureate of several prestigious international competitions, winning scholarships from the Australia Council for the Arts, Arts Victoria and Ian Potter Cultural Trust. In 2012, the trio featured as Musica Viva’s Rising Stars ensemble.

## **Recordings**

The Trio’s debut CD (Ravel· Brahms), released in 2011, is broadcast frequently across Australia. The CD has received high praise in reviews:

“It is quite clear that these young players have entirely identified with this repertoire—their unerring exactitude of tempo and mood is almost psychic.” (Thomas’, 2011)

“There are many accomplished recordings of this wonderful work, and this is one of the finest I have heard.” (Limelight, Feb 2012).

The trio’s second album, “Elation” (2012), was featured as CD of the Week on ABC FM, 3MBS, 2MBS, Radio National and SBS Radio and received great acclaim from Limelight Magazine:

“The Trio is a refreshing find for this reviewer... This is a young trio and their undoubted talent and enthusiasm are infectious.” (June 2012).

The Trio’s 2013 CD recording, “Elena Kats-Chernin: Works for Piano Trio” was again well-received and has had continuous performances on air since its release, including as ABC “CD of the Week”. This CD was praised for its “still-youthful exuberance and razor-sharp technical and interpretative gifts.” (Limelight).

The Trio’s fourth CD, released in 2016, “Felix Mendelssohn: Works for Piano Trio” was described as:

“Outstanding... Mendelssohn as you’ve never heard him played” (Limelight); and “there’s a lot to love about their interpretation – it’s crisp, gutsy and holds its own against the likes of the Beaux Arts Trio” (The Age).

In 2018 The Streeton Trio is the Fine Music FM Ensemble in Residence.

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## **The Piano Trio- a brief historical sketch**

The era of the ensemble of piano, violin and cello, as a distinctive genre, encompasses the period from Mozart and Haydn (late 18<sup>th</sup> century) until the present. The evolution of this form of chamber music runs parallel to, and has been dependent upon, the continuous rise in popularity of the piano,

which stands at the centre of this musical genre. As the piano evolved and grew in stature and social importance, the piano trio, along with other forms of chamber music with piano attracted audiences, performers and composers alike. It became the musical vehicle for some of the greatest chamber music ever written.

Aside from the development of the piano as an instrument of major importance, there were other essential ingredients in the mix, which added to the history of this chamber music format. Another of these was the composition technique itself, which is involved in writing piano trios. This requires a composer being able to give distinctive but equally important roles to each instrument. Each instrument has its own idiom and range, and composers have had to learn how to exploit these distinctive qualities while at the same time integrating all three instruments in as homogeneous a way as possible. The greatest composers from the late eighteenth century to the present have become expert at this craft.

Chamber music of this type, along with string quartets and other small groupings, requires its audience to listen attentively and to actively engage with the music. Well written chamber music invites the audience to listen from inside the musical texture. Music is an abstract language; when we hear music, we recognise it as having speech-like qualities, though we don't know exactly what is being said. Chamber music, more than other musical genres, emphasises this; there is an obvious dialogue going on between the instrumental participants. Taking this a step further, rather than letting the music 'wash over' the listener, chamber music invites and rewards close observation, both aural and visual. In an intimate setting such as here at Serenata, the audience can most easily become part of the musical action, sharing in the music making with the performers. (Robert Constable)

## The Programme

### Joseph Haydn: *Trio in G Hob XV/25 (1795)*

- I. Andante
- II. Poco Adagio, Cantabile
- III. Rondo L'Onghrese, Presto

When Haydn lived in London during the early 1790s, he made the acquaintance of a widow, Rebecca Schroeter, who became his piano pupil and later his love interest. The widow Schroeter was twenty years Haydn's junior and it seems they often dined together in the evenings as well as sharing an intimate correspondence, which continued even after the composer had returned to Vienna. These letters have survived in the Haydn archives. Because of their close association, Haydn wrote and dedicated to Schroeter a number of piano sonatas and piano trios at this time. This trio, nicknamed "Gypsy Rondo", is one of that collection of pieces.

The title "Gypsy Rondo" has been attached to this music, probably by a publisher, because of its final movement, which is based on a vigorous Hungarian dance tune. Haydn fashions this Hungarian-style melody into an exhilarating, breathtaking rondo movement. Before we get to the exciting finale, there are two earlier movements. The first of these is a gentle set of variations built upon an attractive and memorable theme. The second is an affectionate little slow movement marked *Adagio cantabile*. In each of the first two movements, the idea of music as 'an amiable dialogue' is very easy to detect. Perhaps one might even characterize this music as being an abstract version of an amiable after dinner conversation between the widow Schroeter and the venerable maestro.

### Harry Sdraulig: *Joybox (2017)*

Born in Melbourne in 1992, Harry Sdraulig studied composition at the universities of Melbourne and Sydney. Sdraulig's works are frequently performed and broadcast across Australia, and have also been heard in Europe, the UK, and the USA. He has been commissioned by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, PLEXUS ensemble, Macedon Music, Musica Viva Australia, the Zelman Symphony Orchestra, and Ensemble Three, along with numerous solo and individual commissions. He has also received several awards including the Australian Postgraduate Award, Glen Johnston Composition Award (Audience Prize), Adolph Spivakovsky Award, and the Frank Albert Prize for Music. Sdraulig writes:

*Joybo was commissioned for Musica Viva Australia under the auspices of the Ken Tribe Fund for Australian Composers. My trio, Joybox, is an energetic and fast-paced, toccata-like exploration of a single thematic idea which is subjected to a multitude of transformations and interruptions during its short journey. The title is derived from the modern word, 'jukebox', and the rapid changes in mood and style may be likened to a jukebox quickly cycling through different musical tracks.*

### Paul Schoenfeld: *Café Music (1985)*

Paul Schoenfeld (1947 -) is a classical composer who often writes music which combines popular, folk, and classical musical idioms. His *Café Music* fits that description perfectly. The composer writes:

*The idea to compose my trio, Cafe Music, first came to me in 1985 after sitting in one night for the pianist at Murray's Restaurant in Minneapolis. Murray's employs a house trio, which plays entertaining dinner music in a wide variety of styles. My intention was to write a kind of high-class dinner music, which could be played at a restaurant, but might also find its way into a concert hall. Café Music draws on many of the types of music played by the trio at Murray's. For example, early 20th century American, Viennese, light classical, Gypsy, and Broadway styles are all represented. A paraphrase of a beautiful Hasidic melody is incorporated in the second movement.*

*Cafe Music* was commissioned by the St Paul Chamber Orchestra and received its premiere during that orchestra's chamber concert in January 1985.

Schoenfeld is a Professor of Composition at the University of Michigan. He is also a dedicated scholar of the Talmud and of mathematics.

### **Fazil Say: *Space Jump* opus 46 (2012)**

Born in 1970, Fazil Say is a Turkish composer who has written a large body of music which is played throughout the world by major orchestras and performers. In addition to frequent commissions for new works, Say's music has brought him many accolades, awards and honours.

Written in 2012, the title *Space Jump* refers to the extreme sport of free fall parachute jumping. Say writes:

*In October 2012, the extreme sportsman Felix Baumgartner undertook a parachute jump from the stratosphere. This unique and spectacular event inspired me to compose my piano trio Space Jump.*

*We look down from the space capsule to Earth at a distance of 39 kilometres. The parachutist stands poised to jump; his body is suffused with nervous tension in the moment prior to the jump and we see how, as he plummets towards earth, he breaks the sound barrier with an incredible velocity (I imagined him moving as fast as the speed of sound) and finally we have the triumph of the successful landing with a feeling of victory and utter joy.*

### **Maurice Ravel: *Piano Trio* (1914)**

Written in the key of A minor, Ravel's piano trio consists of four movements:

- I. Modéré
- II. Pantoum (Assez vif)
- III. Passacaille (Très large)
- IV. Final (Animé)

In composing his Trio, Ravel was aware of the compositional difficulties posed by this instrumental genre. In fact, he had been planning to write a piano trio for at least six years prior to actually commencing the piece. He was aware of the central challenge of this form – to reconcile the contrasting sounds of the piano and the string instruments, and achieve balance between them. He was particularly concerned about the cello, feeling that, of the three instruments it was the easiest to obscure through over-zealous writing for the other two instruments.

Ravel resolved this dilemma by making extensive use of the extreme ranges of each instrument. In doing so, he created a texture of sound unusually rich for a chamber work. He employed coloristic effects, particularly in the high register, such as trills, tremolos, harmonics, glissandos, and arpeggios, thus demanding a high level of technical proficiency from all three musicians. In order to achieve clarity in texture and to secure instrumental balance, Ravel frequently spaced the violin and cello lines two or more octaves apart, with the piano playing in between them.

Inspiration for this music came from a wide variety of sources, from Basque dance to Malaysian poetry. The second movement is entitled *Pantoum*, which is a form of Malaysian poetry, the music imitating the typical structure of that style of poem. He also bases some of his music on the folk song of his native Basque region of France.

Although Ravel described his trio as being in the key of A minor, his harmonic approach is very fluid, even at times bordering upon atonality.

Ravel's Trio is dedicated to the composer's counterpoint teacher, André Gedalge and was first performed in Paris in January 1915.

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