The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

Tuesday, October 18, 2016 at 7:30 PM

Notes on the Program by Dr. Richard E. Rodda

Symphony No. 94 in G major for Piano, Flute, Two Violins, Viola, and Cello, Hob. I:94, "Surprise"

Joseph Haydn
Born March 31, 1732 in Rohrau, Lower Austria.
Died May 31, 1809 in Vienna.
Arranged by Johann Peter Salomon
Baptized February 20, 1745 in Bonn, Germany.
Died November 28, 1815 in London.

Composed in 1791.
Premiered on March 23, 1792 in London, under the composer's supervision.

Imitation, according to the old saying, is the sincerest form of flattery. As evidenced by the recent spate of Roman-numeral movie sequels and television spin-offs, it can also be profitable, a financial strategy already well known in Haydn's day. When the violinist and impresario Johann Peter Salomon snatched Haydn away from Vienna at the end of 1790 to star in his London winter programs, even he could not foresee the enormous success that marked their initial series of concerts at the Hanover Square Rooms. The composer, with his personal charm, his broken English and his delightful music, was the sensation of the season. Salomon's chief rival, the so-called "Professional Concerts," saw the value of imported talent, and engaged Ignaz Pleyel, a student of Haydn and one of the day's most popular musicians (Mozart thought he might be good enough to some day supplant his teacher), for their concerts of 1792. (A bit of knife-twisting also inspired the Professional Concerts' move, since Haydn had consistently refused their regular invitations between 1782 and 1788 to visit London, though he was so busy and so tightly contracted to the Esterházy family in Hungary at the time that he could hardly send his *music* abroad, much less himself.) Pleyel promised to present a new piece at each of his concerts, so to keep up with the competition, Haydn determined to offer a similar attraction.

Haydn won many important friends and admirers during his time in London, including no less a personage than the Prince of Wales — later George IV — and he spent the summer of 1791 visiting their country houses. August found him at Roxford, the estate of the banker Nathaniel Brassey near Hertingfordbury in Hertfordshire, "amid the loveliest scenery," Haydn reported in a letter to Maria Anna von Genzinger, wife of the physician at Esterházy Castle. "I work hard, and when in the early mornings I walk in the woods alone, with my English grammar book, I think of my Creator, my family and all the friends I have left behind." Among his projects at Roxford were the Symphonies Nos. 94 and 95 for Solomon's upcoming season, both largely completed by the time he returned to London in mid-September. (The Symphonies Nos. 97 and 98 and the splendid *Sinfonia Concertante* in B-flat were finished in London early the next year.) Plans for the competing series presented by Salomon and the Professional Concerts proceeded during the fall, and the local press readied itself for a tasty *guerre des musiciens*. When Pleyel arrived in December, however, he deflated the journalists' plans by immediately paying his respects to Haydn and informing them that the first piece on his first concert would be one of his (Haydn's) symphonies. Haydn returned the compliment by insisting that Salomon program some music of Pleyel.

Though gentle and generous, Haydn had no intention of allowing Pleyel to beat him at his own game. He again took up one of the Roxford symphonies, the G major, and crossed out the original opening of its slow movement, an ingratiating melody used as the theme for a set of variations. He reorchestrated the tune, and punctuated its mid-point with a crashing chord that would have the impact of an unexpected cannon-shot after the delicate measures for strings preceding it. "It was my wish," Haydn later told his biographer Georg August Griesinger, "to surprise the public with something new, and to make a debut in a brilliant manner in order not to be outdone by my pupil Pleyel ... [whose] concert series had begun eight days before mine." Haydn's tactic worked. Whereas in many of his earlier symphonies the *Andantes* had created a success, this new one created a sensation. Its first performance, on March 23, 1792, inspired the reviewer for the *Oracle* to a flight of Arcadian prose: "The second movement was equal to the happiest of this great Master's conceptions. The surprise might not be unaptly likened to the situation of a beautiful Shepherdess, who, lulled to slumber by the murmur of a distant Waterfall, starts alarmed by the unexpected firing of a fowling piece." The *Morning Herald* noted that "critical applause was fervid and abundant," and *Woodfall's Register* allowed that the new Symphony was "simple, profound and sublime. The *Andante* movement was

particularly admired." Haydn told Griesinger that "the first *Allegro* was received with countless bravos, but the enthusiasm reached its highest point in the *Andante* with the kettledrum stroke. *Ancora, ancora!* sounded from every throat, and even Pleyel [who attended all of Haydn's concerts] complimented me on my idea." The work was soon dubbed "Surprise" by the English public (in German it is known as *Mit dem Paukenschlag* — "*With the Timpani Stroke*"), and proved to be Haydn's most popular instrumental work. In his later years, Haydn, who loved good jokes in both his music and his conversation, was quoted as saying that "the chord" was meant "to make the ladies cry out." The embellishments on this probably apocryphal explanation included one concerning Haydn's desire to rouse the somnolent gentlemen of the audience from the dinner-induced stupor of their evening's nap, and another that he wanted to startle one particular elderly subscriber who always fell asleep at the concert's earliest opportunity. These tales are refuted by the concert order itself, since Haydn placed the Symphony immediately after the intermission, when the crowd would hardly have yet had time to doze off before his surprise was unveiled. Word of this extraordinary new work raced through musical circles, and Salomon himself arranged the complete Symphony for piano trio as well as for the ingenious combination of string quartet, flute and piano *ad libitum* to meet the enormous amateur demand for its availability. (So financially successful was the London venture that he paid Haydn the then-enormous sum of £300 for writing the six symphonies of 1791-1792 and an additional £200 for their copyright.) With its easily remembered sobriquet, the "Surprise" Symphony retained its popularity, and was one of the tiny handful of Haydn's works played with any regularity in the century-and-a-half that followed (Louis Antoine Jullien's orchestra gave the piece during its 1853-1854 Boston season with what William Foster Apthorp believed to be "the largest bass drum ever seen in this country up to that time") before the re-evaluation of his music in the 1950s.

Salomon's arrangement retains the complete musical substance of the "Surprise" Symphony while translating the work into chamber instrumentation. His transcription is skillfully done: the string parts are kept largely intact (though the viola is sometimes assigned the bassoon line); the flute takes over the most prominent wind solos; and the keyboard part gives a likeness of the manner in which Haydn himself would have presided over the London performance from the piano. As do all the other of the London symphonies save one (No. 95), the "Surprise" opens with a slow introduction. These preludial gestures exhibit some of the most advanced harmonic techniques of the day, and almost invariably contain measures whose

bittersweet expression was influenced by Mozart's recent music. (News of his friend's death on December 5, 1791 in Vienna reached Haydn in London ten days after the tragedy, just as preparations were being completed for the concerts at which this Symphony was premiered. Mozart was 35; Haydn was 59, and lived for another eighteen years.) The sonata structure that follows unfolds with an ease and seeming inevitability that belie its closely reasoned and tightly controlled extrapolation from its opening motives.

The (in)famous *Andante* is, aside from the Austrian national hymn, Haydn's most famous music. According to the composer's biographer H.E. Jacob, its theme (which in our litigious age could well be hauled into court for copyright infringement of *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*) replicates the German folk ditty *Gassle naus und nunter, hangen schwarze kirschen runter* ("*Going my way down the street, I saw the black cherries dangling*"). The eminent British musicologist Sir Donald Tovey wrote that the tune "has an anserine [stupid or foolish, from the Latin word for 'goose'] solemnity, which undoubtedly enhances the indecorum of the famous *Paukenschlag* ['*timpani stroke*,' the sobriquet by which the composition is known in Germany]." The joke spent, the ensuing variations offer several ingenious permutations of the theme (including the obligatory minor-tonality stanza) that provide a superb example of the manner in which Haydn effortlessly blended popular elements with the highest musical craft in order to please listeners at all levels of sophistication. To wit, on his second trip to London, in 1794, Haydn stopped en route at an inn in Wiesbaden. He heard the theme from this movement being played in some distant room, and discovered a group of Prussian officers gathered around the piano. He introduced himself as the music's author, but the soldiers refused to believe him until he produced a letter and a diamond ring from King Frederick Wilhelm II. Convinced, the Prussian gentlemen ordered champagne in Haydn's honor. The *Minuet* and sonata-rondo *Finale* which round out the Symphony No. 94 are further evidence that Haydn's is perhaps the healthiest and most emotionally stable music that anyone has ever written. "A lack of appreciation for Haydn," according to Bernard Jacobson, "is a species of the inability to enjoy the good things in life."

Three Songs for Soprano and Piano

Felix Mendelssohn
Born February 3, 1809 in Hamburg.
Died November 4, 1847 in Leipzig.

Mendelssohn wrote songs throughout his life, some 120 of them, that reflect the elegance, polish, craftsmanship and emotional reserve that characterized both his personality and his other compositions. He was introduced to the form by his rigorous but conservative teacher, Carl Friedrich Zelter, director of the Berlin Singakademie, who advocated the traditional late-18th-century form of the German *Lied*, with its strophic structure, subservient piano accompaniment and restrained expression, over the newer, emotionally penetrating and formally adventuresome songs of Schubert. Mendelssohn's songs were well suited to the intimate parlor gatherings that played such an important role in 19th-century musical life, though they were elevated above the customary Biedermeier salon fare by their finesse, harmonic subtlety and graceful lyricism. So well do Mendelssohn's songs embody essential elements of his creative personality that Wilfred Blunt chose one — *On Wings of Song* — as the title of his 1974 biography of the composer.

Wanderlied ("*Wandering Song*," 1843, Op. 57, No. 6) is based on Joseph von Eichendorff's *Frische Fahrt* ("*Brisk Journey*") of 1810, in which the poet gives himself over to the alluring pleasures of spring without heed for the unknown outcome of the journey.

Lilting piano arpeggios suggest the dreamy Orientalism of Heinrich Heine's *Auf Flügeln des Gesanges* ("*On Wings of Song*," Op. 34, No. 2; 1835). Mendelssohn deemed that its sensuous text and subtle lyricism made the song an appropriate musical missive for dedication to Cécile Jeanrenaud, the daughter of a minister at the French Reformed Church in Frankfurt, whom he was to marry two years later.

Suleika (1843, Op. 57, No. 3) draws on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, though in a roundabout way. In July 1814, Goethe set out from his home in Weimar on a trip through the Rhineland that was intended to stir his creativity for a collection of poems titled *West-östlicher Divan*, inspired by a similarly named set by the 14th-century Persian poet Hafiz. Goethe's poems, according to the renowned German interpreter of Schubert's songs Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, were intended to "combine ideas of universal love, wisdom and polarity of East and West in one work." In Wiesbaden, Goethe met Marianne Jung-Willemer, a "half-Gypsy," who greatly impressed him. Back in Weimar, he began a correspondence with Marianne, whom he called by the exotic name Suleika, and he included her lyrical poem-letters in his *Divan*. In 1843, Mendelssohn set Marianne's poem *Was bedeutet die Bewegung?* ("*What can this excitement mean?*") under the title *Suleika*.

Der Hirt auf dem Felsen ("*The Shepherd on the Rock*") for Soprano, Clarinet and Piano, D. 965, Op. 129

Franz Schubert
Born January 31, 1797 in Vienna.
Died November 19, 1828 in Vienna.

Composed in 1828.

Anna Milder-Hauptmann, one of the leading German sopranos of her day, was born in 1785 in Constantinople, where her father was serving as ambassador for the Austrian government. Upon arriving in Vienna at the turn of the century, she attracted the attention of Emanuel Schickaneder, the theatrical impresario who had collaborated with Mozart on *The Magic Flute* in 1791, and he recommended her as a student to Salieri and Tomaselli. She made her operatic debut in Vienna in 1803 with such good effect that she was soon added to the roster of the Court Opera. Beethoven wrote the role of Leonora in *Fidelio* for Milder-Hauptmann in 1805, and she spread her reputation through northern Europe with highly acclaimed tours during the following years. Her greatest Viennese triumphs came with her roles in Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride*, *Alcestis* and *Armida* in 1812; three years later she became *prima donna assoluta* at the Berlin Court Opera. In 1829, she participated in Mendelssohn's epochal revival of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*. She left Berlin in 1831, but continued to perform in Russia, Germany, Austria and Scandinavia for several years, giving her farewell appearance in Vienna in 1836. Anna Milder-Hauptmann died in Berlin in 1838.

Schubert's earliest exposure to Milder-Hauptmann's artistry came in 1812, while he was still a music student at the imperial choir school, with her appearance in *Iphigénie en Tauride* at the Kärntnertor Theater. So moved was he by her singing that he almost came to blows with a university professor who expressed an opposing view in a café after the performance. Sometime before she left for Berlin, she and Schubert became friends, and they occasionally corresponded during the following years. Early in 1825, she asked him if he had any operas that he would like her to propose for production in Berlin. Schubert, ever hopeful of breaking into the musical theater, promptly sent her the score for *Alfonso und Estrella*, and, in appreciation of her interest, dedicated to her his new song *Suleika II*. After she had performed *Suleika* and the *Erlkönig* on a Berlin recital, she replied, "*Suleika's Second Song* is heavenly and moves me to tears.... However many songs you may want to dedicate to me, this can only be most agreeable and flattering to me." Her report

concerning *Alfonso und Estrella* was less encouraging, however: "I am very sorry to say that its libretto does not accord with local taste. *Alfonso und Estrella* could not possibly make its fortune here."

In 1828, Anna requested from Schubert a bravura concert piece for her recitals. Out of regard for her encouragement and her artistry and with the hope that she might help get his gestating opera, *Der Graf von Gleichen*, onto the stage, he created for her the delightful song *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen* ("*The Shepherd on the Rock*"). The text (which Anna may have suggested) is a conflation of verses by Wilhelm Müller (poet of Schubert's *Die Schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*) and Karl August Varnhagen von Ense (who is best known for his biographies, including an 1823 volume on Goethe) which concerns the longing of a shepherd boy for his lady love and the welcome arrival of spring. To partner the soprano, Schubert included a part for clarinet, giving this song something of the quality of a vest-pocket operatic *scena* in which the agility and limpid sonority of the instrument serve as foil and collegial challenge for the voice. Schubert finished *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen* in October 1828, but Milder-Hauptmann did not receive a copy of the song until the following September. She premiered the work at Riga in March 1830, and thereafter included it frequently on her recitals. Tobias Haslinger of Vienna published the score in June as Schubert's Op. 129. The composer, however, was never to hear it performed: *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen*, elegant, brilliant, touching and bursting with melody, was the last of Schubert's more than 600 songs. On November 19th, a month after writing it, he died.

"Sanctus" from *Missa Aeterna Christi Munera*

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina
Born 1525 or 1526 in Palestrina, Lazio, Italy.
Died February 2, 1594 in Rome.

Published in 1590.

"The very first musician in the world ... the prince and father of music ... the celebrated light of music" he was called, the "savior of church music" and the "real king of sacred music." Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina enjoys a reputation almost unmatched in the history of music. Born in 1525 or 1526 in the hill town of Palestrina, east of Rome (by whose name he became universally known), he was trained in music

and sang as a choirboy at Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, and returned home to Palestrina in 1544 to play the organ at the cathedral and teach music. He married a local girl, fathered three musically talented sons, and began to compose before being taken back to Rome by the Bishop of Palestrina, who was elected Pope Julius III in 1550. Despite being married, Palestrina was appointed by Julius first as choirmaster of the Cappella Giulia and later of the Cappella Sistina, the most important components of the musical establishment at St. Peter's. In 1555, Julius died and Palestrina lost his patron. The rules on celibacy were thereafter more strictly enforced, and Palestrina was dismissed from Papal service. For the next sixteen years, he held posts in Rome at St. John Lateran and Santa Maria Maggiore while establishing himself as the leading composer of sacred music of his day — the publications of his works were prized throughout the Roman Catholic world. So great was his renown by 1571 that he was welcomed back to the Cappella Giulia at St. Peter's, a post he held until his death in 1594. Palestrina's vast output — 104 Masses (i.e., the same precisely prescribed text set in 104 different ways!), nearly 300 motets, 68 offertories, 65 hymns, 35 Magnificats, Lamentations, litanies, Psalms and more than 140 early madrigals (for whose secularism Palestrina apologized late in his life) — was held to be the most perfect musical embodiment of the purity, spirituality and universality of the Counter-Reformation. Indeed, his *Pope Marcellus Mass* of 1567, with its elevated style and clear enunciation of the sacred texts, is said to have prevented the Council of Trent from prohibiting the use of polyphonic music in the Church's services. His compositional language, codified and streamlined by later theorists, has served for more than four centuries as the model for both the most pure of all sacred musical styles and for the study of Renaissance counterpoint.

Palestrina's *Missa Aeterna Christi Munera*, published in Rome in 1590 in his Fifth Book of Masses, is among the vast treasury of Renaissance sacred works that incorporate a *cantus firmus* — a "fixed" (i.e., "existing") song. (The idea of precedent, of borrowing from an existing source, was fundamental to the mindset of the early Christian Church, which believed that all things ultimately flowed from God.) The hymn upon which Palestrina based his *Missa Aeterna Christi Munera* (Masses are generally known by their *cantus firmus*) is attributed to the 4th-century St. Ambrose, who wrote it for the feasts of the Apostles and Evangelists; in the traditional liturgy, it is sung at the dawn services of Matins that celebrate those early followers of Jesus — *The eternal gifts of Christ the King, The Apostles' glorious deeds, we sing; And while due hymns of praise we pay, Our thankful hearts cast grief away* (in the 1851 translation by Anglican priest and

hymn writer John Mason Neale). Ambrose's text is not used in Palestrina's Mass, which, like all works of its kind, had to be set to the same liturgically prescribed verses, but each of its movements is based on the hymn's opening phrases in a seemingly effortless display of virtuosic creative ingenuity. The *Sanctus — Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory —* exhibits the pristine counterpoint, harmonic richness and otherworldly calm that characterize Palestrina's most masterful works.

Trio in A minor for Piano, Violin, and Cello

Maurice Ravel
Born March 3, 1875 in Ciboure, France.
Died December 28, 1937 in Paris.

Composed in 1914.
Premiered on January 28, 1915 in Paris by pianist Alfredo Casella, violinist Gabriele Willaume and cellist Louis Teuillard.

Ravel first mentioned that he was planning a trio for piano, violin and cello in a letter of 1908, in which he also announced his intentions to compose a symphony and some still amorphous work on the subject of St. Francis of Assisi. Nothing ever came of the symphony (though he did subtitle his opulent ballet *Daphnis et Chloé* of 1912, "Choreographic Symphony in Three Parts"), and the few sketches that he made for the St. Francis project ended up in *Mother Goose*, according to his friend and colleague the Spanish composer Manuel de Falla, but plans for the trio remained in his thoughts and conversations. When his pupil Maurice Delage once asked about the long-gestating piece, Ravel replied, "Oh, my Trio is finished. I only need the themes for it." He finally jotted down some ideas for the Trio in 1913 at his summer retreat in the seaside town of St. Jean-de-Luz in the southern Basque region (not far from his birthplace), but serious work on the piece did not begin until the following year, when he returned to St. Jean in April. He spent the next three months dabbling leisurely with the score and sketching out some ideas for a suite that was to become *Le Tombeau de Couperin* and a piano concerto based on Basque themes (ultimately abandoned), balancing his labors with long explorations of the surrounding countryside and abundant socializing.

This pleasant schedule was ruined when the Guns of August unleashed their fearsome roar across the Continent to start World War I in 1914. Ravel pledged to aid France's war effort, but first he determined to finish the Trio. On August 3rd, he wrote to Cypa Godebski, "Heaven only knows, old chap, if this will reach you. I hope it will, for it seems to make it easier if I can write to a friend. Since the day before yesterday this sounding of alarms, these weeping women, and, above all, this terrible enthusiasm of the young people and of all the friends who have had to go and of whom I have no news. I cannot bear it any longer. The nightmare is too horrible. I think that at any moment I shall go mad or lose my mind. I have never worked so hard, with such insane, heroic rage. Yes, old man, you cannot imagine how badly I need this kind of heroism in order to combat the other, which is probably the more instinctive feeling. Just think, old man, of the horror of this conflict. It never stops for an instant. What good will it all do? ... I just keep working so as not to hear anything. Yes, I am working with the persistence and concentration of a fool. But suddenly the hypocrisy of this conduct overwhelms me and I begin to sob over my notepaper. When I go downstairs and my mother sees me, naturally I have to show a serene and, if possible, a smiling face. Shall I be able to keep this up? It has lasted four days already since the alarm gongs began." Ravel applied himself unsparingly to the Trio for the next week, and then reported to the garrison at Bayonne to apply for military service. His constitution was frail, however, and his height and weight below the minimum standard, so he was refused entry into the army, and instead worked as an orderly in a military hospital, an exercise in patriotism that impaired his health for the rest of his life. The premiere of the Trio was given on January 28, 1915 at a Société Indépendente concert in the Salle Gaveau in Paris by pianist Alfredo Casella (the Italian composer living in Paris since the 1890s, and one of Ravel's closest friends), violinist Gabriele Willaume and cellist Louis Teuillard, but, in a country absorbed with war, the event drew little notice. More peaceful consideration of the work has since recognized it as one of Ravel's consummate creations.

The first movement of the Piano Trio, written in an irregular but easily flowing meter (8/8) derived from Basque folk music, follows traditional sonata form. The main theme, begun by the piano and taken over by the strings, is a close-interval melody in sensuous, tightly packed parallel harmonies which rises to a peak of intensity before subsiding for the presentation of the subsidiary subject, a lovely, wide-ranging theme that arches through much of the violin's compass. The development section is concerned exclusively with the principal theme and so leads seamlessly into the recapitulation, where shortened versions of the main

and second subjects provide balance and formal closure. A specter of the main theme hovers above the quiescent coda.

The second movement, titled *Pantoum*, serves as the Trio's scherzo. The *pantun* is a Malaysian poetic form in which the second and fourth lines of one stanza become the first and third of the next. Victor Hugo, Charles Baudelaire and other French 19th-century writers adapted the *pantun* for some of their works, and Ravel here made an ingenious musical analogue of the technique by inserting music from the scherzo into the central trio. The outer sections of the movement are based on an evanescent triple-meter strain that requires unassuming but quite amazing feats of ensemble virtuosity. The trio section uses a broad chordal piano theme, four beats to the bar, upon which the strings try to impose the skittering music of the scherzo. No compromise is reached, however, and the roles of strings and piano are reversed, though this, too, proves an impossible thematic misalliance, which the players remedy by once again taking up the scherzo music *tout l'ensemble*.

The third movement is a passacaglia, the old Baroque form in which a melody is repeated intact several times (eight in this Trio) and glossed on each recurrence by different counterpoint and harmonies. The theme of this *Passacaille* is a pensive melody that first unwinds in the deep bass notes of the piano before migrating to other instrumental territories. A climax is reached at the mid-point, after which the music quiets and returns to the lowest reaches of the keyboard to fulfill the large, arching shape of the movement's structure.

The finale is music of enormous tensile strength whose feverish, pent-up emotion is held precisely in check by the clarity of its melodic and contrapuntal lines and the integrity of its sonata-rondo form. Ravel's friend and biographer Roland-Manuel noted this masterful interplay of heated emotion and cool structural logic when he observed that "[this music's] austerity is both passionate and chaste."

Norman Demuth wrote of Ravel's Trio, "This is a monumental work. Not only are the themes broad but the whole is conceived on a big scale. The resources of all the instruments are exploited to the fullest degree. Every string device is explored and used.... There is no gainsaying the greatness of the work and its consummate workmanship. We see the complete expression of Ravel's genius, the sum total of his musicality. The Trio bears comparison with the greatest. It is big without being grandiloquent or portentous. There is not one note too many. Many composers talk so much and say so little. Ravel talks a lot

in this work and every word is of moment. It is not music for the amateur. A real performance can be given only by players with a vast musical experience."