

**Amici Chamber Ensemble 30th Anniversary
with Isabel Bayrakdarian and Friends**

Friday, April 27, 2018 at 8:00pm

This is the 827th concert in Koerner Hall

Amici Chamber Ensemble

Joaquin Valdepeñas, clarinet

David Hetherington, cello

Serouj Kradjian, piano

Isabel Bayrakdarian, soprano

Yehonatan Berick, violin

Katya Poplyansky, violin *

Steven Dann, viola

Theodore Chan, bass

Kelly Zimba, flute

Gabriel Radford, horn

Steven Woomert, trumpet

Bryn Lutek, percussion *

PROGRAM

Ottorino Respighi: *Il tramonto*, for voice and string quartet

Ernö Dohnányi: Sextet in C Major, op. 37

- I. Allegro appassionato
- II. Intermezzo: Adagio
- III. Allegro con sentimento
- IV. Finale: Allegro vivace, giocoso

INTERMISSION

Selection by winners of The Glenn Gould School Chamber Music Competition

Leonard Bernstein: "A Simple Song" from *Mass* (arr. John Greer)

"A Julia de Burgos" from *Songfest* (arr. John Greer)

"Dream With Me" from *Peter Pan* (arr. John Greer)

"I Can Cook Too" from *On the Town* (arr. John Greer)

Leonard Bernstein: Clarinet Sonata

- I. Grazioso
- II. Andantino - Vivace e leggiero

Leonard Bernstein: *West Side Story* medley

*Glenn Gould School student

Ottorino Respighi

Born in Bologna, Italy, July 9, 1879; died in Rome, Italy, April 18, 1936

Il tramonto (The Sunset) (1914)

In 1914, Respighi set to music for mezzo-soprano a poem by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792- 1822), the great English poet and husband of Mary Shelley, author of the gothic novel *Frankenstein*. The work was composed specifically for Chiarana Fino Savio, a friend of the composer to whom he also dedicated the work, and for string quartet or string ensemble. The poem itself embodies the purest Romantic tradition, with its depiction of a sunset symbolizing the death of two lovers, much like Wagner's *Liebestod*, which concludes *Tristan and Isolde*.

Two other poems by Shelley were set by Respighi, whose output in the genre totals fifty: *Aretusa (Arethusa)*, 1910) and *La sensitiva (The Sensitive Plant)*, 1914), though they are less well-known than *Il Tramonto*. For the latter, Respighi chose a syllabic style in broad strokes, in a more post-Romantic than neo-Classical vein. Here, the strings effectively magnify the words and instrumental interludes punctuate the overall atmosphere, drawing out the lyricism inherent in the text. Because of the intimacy between soloist and strings, the work has sometimes been described as a symphonic vocal poem. - *Claire Villeneuve*

Ernö Dohnányi

Born in Pozsony, Hungary, July 27, 1877; died in New York, NY, February 9, 1960

Sextet in C Major, op. 37

Ernö Dohnányi was one of the founders of modern musical life in Hungary. He was to exert great influence as teacher and administrator, but he made perhaps his greatest contribution through his early decision to remain in Budapest for his training - the first Hungarian of notable talent to do so. By example and influence, he persuaded Bartók and others to do the same. However, unlike his younger contemporaries Bartók and Kodály, and in spite of his nationalism, Dohnányi had no interest in Hungarian folk-music studies, nor in avant garde musical techniques of the twentieth century. As a virtuoso pianist, he followed in the tradition of Liszt, and as a composer he continued the German style of Mendelssohn and Brahms.

Indeed, it was Brahms who approvingly arranged the première in Vienna of the eighteen-year-old Dohnányi's Op. 1 the *Piano Quintet in c minor* in 1895. Forty years later the *Sextet in C Major, op. 37* (1935) opened with a Brahmsian horn-call that showed the composer still true to his youthful inspiration. The *Sextet*, to be sure, shows a more advanced idiom than the Brahms style of the late nineteenth century, especially in the extended chromatic handling of harmonies and tonalities, where unmistakably the lasting influence of Wagner can be heard. In form too, the work remains true to Romantic traditions, including the integration of musical ideas among the movements, such as the recurrence of the opening horn-call in the transition to the *Finale* and again towards the end. Nevertheless, eclectic and conservative as he may have been, Dohnányi spoke with his own voice and fashioned the *Sextet* with imagination and brio.

- *Carl Morey*

Leonard Bernstein

Born in Lawrence, Massachusetts, August 25, 1918; died New York, New York, October 14, 1990

Clarinet Sonata

The prodigious U.S. composer-conductor was 23 when he composed this sonata, yet it is his first acknowledged composition. It is certainly worth acknowledging - a remarkable work, with an obvious debt to Hindemith, but with a lyricism more natural than Hindemith's and many jazzy devices clearly Bernstein's own. Of the two movements the *Grazioso* is full of easy-going charm, the more discursive and various *Andantino* gives us a spare, quiet opening, some jittery dance-like quick music, a lovely nostalgic slow interlude, and a final return to the dance.

Medley from *The West Side Story* (arr. S. Kradjian)

The West Side Story, is not only one of the landmark achievements of American musical theater, it also became a legendary success on Broadway at its opening in September 1957. A modern adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* that plays out in New York slums, it was called a "social music drama" by its creators, composer Bernstein, lyricist Stephen Sondheim, and choreographer Jerome Robbins. Tonight's medley highlights some of its most special moments.

Amici Chamber Ensemble

The Amici Chamber Ensemble is celebrating its 30th anniversary as one of Canada's finest and most distinguished music ensembles. Artistic Directors clarinetist Joaquin Valdepeñas, cellist David Hetherington, and pianist Serouj Kradjian invite some of the finest musicians to join them in innovative and eclectic programming, celebrating friendship through music. Joaquín Valdepeñas is regarded as one of the most distinguished clarinetists of his generation. Active soloist, chamber musician, and conductor, he has performed at festivals and concerts series throughout the world. David Hetherington is a cellist performing as a soloist and chamber musician around the world. He is also a prolific music teacher and coach nationally. He is said to play his 1695 cello made by Giovanni Grancino of Milan "with rare delicacy and clarity". Pianist and composer Serouj Kradjian is hailed as a "keyboard acrobat" of "crystal virtuosity" by the press. His prowess in breaking boundaries as soloist, chamber musician as well as composer and arranger has been praised across North America and Europe. www.amiciensemble.com

Isabel Bayrakdarian

Soprano

A winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions in 1997 – the same year she graduated from the University of Toronto *cum laude* with a Biomedical Engineering Degree – Isabel Bayrakdarian's career has taken her to all the major opera houses and the premier orchestras of North America and Europe. She has sung regularly at the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Canadian Opera Company, Los Angeles Opera, Salzburg Festival, London's Royal Opera House, Paris Opera, in roles ranging from Mozart to Handel, Poulenc, Janáček, as well as the world premiere of Bolcom's *View From the Bridge*. She is the featured vocalist on the Grammy Award-winning soundtrack of *The Lord of The Rings: The Two Towers*. Bayrakdarian is also the winner of four consecutive Juno Awards for Best Classical Album, and was recently awarded the "Komitas Medal" and the "Movses Khorenatsi Medal" for highest artistic achievement from the Republic of Armenia. In 2017-18 season, she makes her directorial debut in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* with the UCSB Opera Theatre in collaboration with Opera Santa Barbara, as well as concertizing in Canada and the US with the St Lawrence String Quartet, McGill Chamber Orchestra, Opera in Concert, Parry Sound Festival, with recitals in High River (Alberta), New York, Los Angeles, and Santa Barbara. She holds an Honorary Fellowship from The Royal Conservatory of Music and an Honorary Doctorate from Wilfrid Laurier University. Ms Bayrakdarian has been on the Voice Faculty at University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB) since 2014 as Assistant Professor.

Amici Chamber Ensemble made its Koerner Hall debut on March 1, 2013, and Isabel Bayrakdarian on October 10, 2009, during Koerner Hall's Grand Opening Festival.