

September 16, 2008

7:30 PM

Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center

Frank and Katrina Basile Theater

**Bella Hristova, 2006 IVCI Laureate
with the Ronen Chamber Ensemble**

David and Ingrid Fischer-Bellman, Artistic Directors

PROGRAM NOTES

By Cathleen Partlow Strauss

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809): Divertimento in G major for Flute, Violin and Cello, Hob. IV: 7

The incredibly prolific Franz Joseph Haydn composed 68 string quartets and 104 symphonies, among many other large-scale works, during his lifetime. He also composed numerous diversions, or works for amateurs. A critique published in 1802 about Divertimenti in general referred to these kinds of pieces as “mere tone paintings aiming at the delight of the ear.” Haydn’s Divertimenti actually go quite beyond this description exhibiting a high level of compositional refinement, expressive power, and humor.

The charming and light Divertimento No. 2 in G major was written in 1784 and borrows material and formal ideas from the trio Hob. XI: 97 for baryton, an obsolete bowed string instrument in the viol family. The three movement work opens with an *Allegro* and is followed by a quiet and contemplative slow movement. A vivacious *Allegro* closes the work.

Charles Ives (1874-1954): Largo for Violin, Clarinet, and Piano

Charles Ives was a Connecticut native and graduate of Yale University who spent his career as a successful insurance executive. His contribution to that field laid the foundation for modern estate planning in that he devised creative ways to structure life-insurance packages.

Ives’ passion, however, was music. He wrote an enormous amount of it, although it was largely ignored during his lifetime. He did have his pieces performed, but after their premieres they then lay dormant for many years. The last thirty years he was alive he wrote little, while his reputation grew. In 1947 he was awarded a Pulitzer Prize, a prize he rejected.

He is now considered an “American Original.” He combined American popular and church-music traditions with European art music, and was among the first composers to experiment with polytonality, polyrhythm, elements of chance, and the expressive altering of pitches bending them into quarter tones. His experiments foreshadowed every major musical innovation of the 20th century.

The Largo for Violin, Clarinet, and Piano was likely written in 1934, an arrangement of an earlier Largo for Violin and Piano which was written in 1901. The first documented performance was presented in New York City on May 10, 1951, by the New Music Society at Columbia University.

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971): Divertimento for Violin and Piano (after *The Fairy's Kiss* ballet)

Stravinsky's ballet *The Fairy's Kiss* (*Le baiser de la fée*) was composed in 1928 and premiered in honor of the 35th anniversary of Tchaikovsky's death. Stravinsky enthusiastically took on the project because Tchaikovsky had been his favorite composer from the time he was a young child. Based on the Hans Christian Anderson fairy tale, *The Ice Maiden*, the story is of a boy who is doomed by the kiss of the Ice Maiden.

Stravinsky was thrilled to write the musical score for the ballet. Earlier in his career he had set some music Tchaikovsky had discarded from the ballet *Sleeping Beauty*. He had also previously defined some thematic material he wanted to use in a work yet to be birthed. For this ballet, Stravinsky used a number of Tchaikovsky's minor songs and piano pieces.

Stravinsky then combined several sections from the ballet score into a four-movement divertimento for orchestra. Around the same time, Stravinsky was performing as a pianist on tour with violinist Samuel Dushkin. It was for this duo that the Divertimento for Violin and Piano version was given life. It was conceived in 1934 at a time when Stravinsky was writing most of the music he would ever compose for violin, including the *Duo Concertante* and *Suite Italienne*. The premise of all of these works was based on parity for both solo instruments.

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904): String Quintet in G major, Op. 77

Dvořák wrote many pieces of chamber music that remain a constant in today's performance repertoire. His music is marked by a poignant expressivity communicated through endless melody and rhythmic vitality. The String Quintet in G major, Op. 77 was actually written much earlier than the opus number would intimate. Composed in early March of 1875 when Dvořák was 32 years old, it was originally numbered opus 18. Dvořák entered the piece in a competition and was awarded a small monetary prize. The work is dedicated, "To my Nation." It received its first performance on March 18, 1876 in Prague, but then sat unplayed and unknown for over a decade. Later in his career Dvořák returned to some of his earlier unpublished works to polish them up and then get them printed in order to keep up with the demand for his music.

String quintet instrumentation varies. The basis of the string quintet is a string quartet which has two violins, a viola and a cello. Sometimes the extra instrument is a viola, sometimes a cello. In this case, Dvořák's choice of the contrabass gives the ensemble lush breadth and an orchestral range of sound.

The first movement marked "fast with fire" is composed in a standard sonata form. Themes are clearly delineated and the development is skillful and powerful. The second movement, a lively folk dance, is most like Dvořák's later style. He expands this scherzo form with imaginative variety. The third movement is a poignant, lyrical song colored with a bit of melancholy. The finale revives the drive of the first two movements, with the addition of even more winning melodies, fuller textures and a prominently featured contrabass.