Christiania Piano Trio
Premiere September 20, 2020
Performed at the Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island
The Amelia Island Chamber Music Festival is nationally recognized as one of the foremost music events of its kind. The Festival is a not-for-profit, tax-exempt organization under Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

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**About the AICMF**

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**PROGRAM**

**THE CHRISTIANIA PIANO TRIO**

- David Coucheron, violin
- Christopher Rex, cello
- Julie Coucheron, piano

Premiere September 20, 2020

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**Six Pieces in Canonic Form, Op. 56**

Arranged by Theodor Kirchner

- Romance - Innig, Etwas bewegter (intimate, a little more moving) in A flat major
- Intermezzo-Andantino, Etwas schneller (a little faster) in E flat major
- Nocturne-Mit innigem Ausdruck (with heartfelt expression) in A minor
- Humoresque- Nicht schnell (not quickly) in B minor

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**ROBERT SCHUMANN**

(1810-1856)

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**Piano Trio No. 1 in D minor, Op. 49**

Arranged by Theodor Kirchner

- Molto allegro ed agitato D minor
- Andante con moto tranquillo B-flat major
- Scherzo: Leggero e vivace D major
- Finale: Allegro assai appassionato D minor, ending in D major

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**FELIX MENDELSSON**

(1809-1847)
Robert Schumann: Six Pieces in Canon Form, Op. 56
Arranged by Theodor Kirchner

“Talent works, genius creates.” - Robert Schumann

Robert Schumann’s Six Pieces in Canon Form, Op. 56 were written in the early months of 1845 during his “Fugenpassion” phase. He was preoccupied with counterpoint and had installed a pedal board on his piano. His diary for February 2 reads: “Continually engrossed in the study of the fugue with Clara” and on the 18th he penned: “busy with fugal studies the last three weeks.” Clara wrote: “Robert quickly showed interest for this instrument and composed various sketches and studies for the pedal piano. They will certainly gain appeal for being something revolutionary.”

Today pedal pianos are rare but in the 18th-century their development played a part in the evolution of instruments. Like the organ, a pedal piano provides a row of foot pedals to afford bass notes. Schumann first encountered the pedal piano during his brief stay as a member of the inaugural faculty at the Leipzig Conservatory founded by Mendelssohn in 1843. Contrary to Schumann’s high hopes and expectations for the pedal piano, its popularity waned. The Canonic Studies for pedal piano by Schumann survived thanks to the efforts of other composers. Seeing the need to preserve these ingenious gems, they arranged the Etudes for different instruments. Theodor Kirchner (1823-1903) a student at the Leipzig Conservatory, arranged the pieces for piano trio as well as an arrangement for piano using four hands. He was considered to be one of the finest arrangers of his time. Both Schumann and Brahms sought his skills to arrange their works for small groups. Claude Debussy (1862-1918) later arranged the Six Studies for two pianos and Paul Bazeilaire (1886-1958) crafted his interpretation for these unique pieces. Bazeilaire was not only a cello prodigy, but also an accomplished pianist.

Our program of the Six Etudes, Op. 56 includes three of Bazeilaire’s arrangements for Piano Trio: the Romance, Intermezzo-Andantino, and Humoresque while the Nocturne is a “free arrangement” by Kirchner which was composed in 1888.

Romance - Innig, Etwas bewegter (intimate, a little more moving) in A flat major
Intermezzo-Andantino, Etwas schneller (a little faster) in E flat major
Nocturne - Mit innigem Ausdruck (with heartfelt expression) in A minor
Humoresque - Nicht schnell (not quickly) in B minor

~Emma Mills Bledsoe, 2020

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Christiania Piano Trio

The Festival-favorite Christiania Piano Trio is composed of violinist David Couchemeron, pianist Julie Couchemeron, and cellist Christopher Rex.

Mr. Couchemeron was the youngest concertmaster among any major U.S. orchestra at the time of his appointment at the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra in 2010. He has worked with such conductors as ASO Music Director Robert Spano, Michael Tilson Thomas, Mstislav Rostropovich and Charles Dutoit. Mr. Couchemerson has performed as a soloist with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra and Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, in addition to playing solo recitals at Carnegie Hall, London’s Wigmore Hall and the Kennedy Center.

Ms Couchemeron. David’s sister, has established an international career as a soloist and chamber musician. She has won first prize in all of the national competitions she has entered. Ms Couchemeron has worked with Lazar Berman, Claude Frank, Emanuel Ax, Vladimir Feltsman, John O’Connor, Elton John and Christopher O’Riley. She has toured the world playing in such great venues as Verizon Hall, Wigmore Hall, Carnegie Hall.

Mr. Rex, general and artistic director of the Amelia Island Chamber Music Festival, was principal cellist of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra for 39 years before retiring in 2018. He has served in this capacity since 1979, the same year he became the first cellist ever to win the string prize in the Young Artists Competition of the National Federation of Music Clubs. Since then, he has appeared as recitalist and chamber musician across the nation. Prior to joining the Atlanta Symphony, Mr. Rex was a member of the Philadelphia Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy for seven seasons.

PROGRAM NOTES
Piano Trio No. 1 in D minor, Op. 49

“This is what I think art is and what I demand of it: that it pull everyone in, that it show one person’s most intimate thoughts and feelings, that is throw open the window of the soul.” -Felix Mendelssohn

According to The Milton Cross New Encyclopedia of the Great Composers and their Music: “The frustrations, maladjustments, and conflicts of most other great composers make the life story of Felix Mendelssohn as refreshing as sunshine.” Born into a wealthy family in 1809, Mendelssohn was encouraged to develop his talents, married the woman he loved, realized his goals of restoring the neglected music of J.S. Bach to world and founded a conservatory. He was also a successful conductor, a master chess-player and quite handsome. Quoting music critic Herbert Glass: “There are no tragic romantic legends to be spun from such a life... Mendelssohn would eventually be ejected from the composers’ pantheon for not being ‘deep’, just as he was venerated in his lifetime for being perfect.”

The Piano Trio No. 1 in D minor was completed on September 23, 1839. Composed while Mendelssohn was the conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, he was said to have been at the top of his profession. He and his wife Cécile had celebrated their first wedding anniversary and were happily expecting their second child. The Trio was published in 1840, a time when the piano was becoming more virtuosic.

Ferdinand Hiller, pianist and close friend of the composer, is said to have steered the composer towards this work’s more progressive virtuosic style. When Hiller was shown an early draft of the trio, he remarked that he found the piano writing old-fashioned. Later he recalled: “I had lived many years in Paris, seeing Liszt and Chopin every day, so that I was thoroughly accustomed to the richness of passages which marked the new pianoforte school. I made some observations to Mendelssohn on this point, suggesting certain alterations...We discussed it and tried it on the piano over and over again, and I enjoyed the small triumph of at last getting Mendelssohn over to my view.”

In an 1840 review of the Trio Robert Schumann said: “The storm of recent years is finally beginning to abate, and we must admit that it has washed several pearls ashore. Mendelssohn, as one of the many sons of this age, must have had to struggle with and often listen to the insipid declaration of some ignorant critics that ‘the true golden age of music is behind us’ -although it probably affected him less- and has so distinguished himself that we may well say: He is the Mozart of the 19th venture, the most brilliant of musicians, the one who most clearly perceives the contradictions of the age, and the first to reconcile them.”

The first movement of the Trio opens with the cello stating the theme without introduction. The piano provides a syncopated accompaniment underneath and the violin enters later with an altered version of the theme. The second movement, Andante con moto tranquillo, begins with a tender melody introduced by the piano. Reminiscent of Mendelssohn’s Songs Without Words, the right hand carries the melody while the accompaniment is divided between the hands. The violin restates the theme with a counterpoint in the cello.

Leggiero e vivace -light and lively- marks the concise and delicate Scherzo whereas the Finale is marked Allegro assai appassionato -very fast and passionate. This contrasting movement, heavy and complex, is filled with pizzicati, swirling arpeggios, dramatic chromatic octaves and spirals to conclude in D major.

~Emma Mills Bledsoe, 2020
MISSION STATEMENT

The Amelia Island Chamber Music Festival’s threefold mission is to:

1. Present the world’s greatest musical artists in chamber music concerts of classical and alternative genres for diverse audiences;

2. Offer music education to concert attendees, students, and aspiring young musicians; and

3. Promote local businesses and tourism by attracting music lovers from Nassau County, Northeast Florida, and beyond.

Thank you for your continued support!

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