

Junction Trio

SUNDAY | JULY 3 | 8 PM

THE BREAKERS



Stefan Jackiw, violin | **Jay Campbell**, cello | **Conrad Tao**, piano

JOHN ZORN *Ghosts*

(Approximate duration 7 minutes)

IVES Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano

I. Moderato

II. TSIAJ ("This scherzo is a joke"). Presto

III. Moderato con moto

(Approximate duration 23 minutes)

INTERMISSION

RAVEL Piano Trio in A minor, M. 67

I. Modéré

II. Pantoum. Assez vif

III. Passacaille. Très large

IV. Final. Animé

(Approximate duration 26 minutes)

John Zorn (b.1953): *Ghosts*

As the title suggests, *Ghosts* is haunted by musical material from the slow movement of Beethoven's Op. 70 No. 1 "Ghost" trio, reanimated and transformed into scenes of tense internal psychological unease and fits of repeatedly frustrated expectations. Even in moments of temporal stasis, Zorn wields the absence of direction to collapse the musical universe into one obsessive thought or feeling (something certainly found in Beethoven's music). Timbre itself is deliberately suppressed and distorted: violin and cello play with mutes for nearly the entire piece, and the piano is often manipulated by reaching inside the piano to dampen pitches, scrape strings, and manipulate the standard identity and function of the instrument.

Ghosts exists in a perpetual state of emerging: a dream-like state of constantly "becoming", driven by unknown psychological desires and nostalgia. Unlike in music like Beethoven, however, listeners will quickly hear that the nostalgia in *Ghosts* is not the same kind of romantic yearning for the past in wide-eyed reverie. If anything, I feel it as something closer to the concept of the "uncanny valley". Although familiar musical signifiers make appearances (traditional harmonies, quotations, et cetera), what they represent is somehow slightly off -- we recognize them, yet we suspect that they aren't

exactly what they appear to be. The familiar no longer functions as something as a means of orientation, grounded in shared "objective" reality. They are metaphysical ambiguities. They are hallucinations.

Ghosts exists as a piece on its own but can also be performed as the middle movement of a suite of three piano trios (the outer two being the aristos and hexentarot). On the title page of the first trio, Zorn includes a quote of T.S. Eliot: "we shall not cease from exploration/and the end of all our exploring/will be to arrive where we started/and know the place for the first time."

Charles Ives (1874-1954): Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano

The son of a band director, Charles Ives grew up hearing the popular music of his day played by bands in his native Danbury, Connecticut. He played drums in the bands, learned music theory from his father, and was already a church organist in his teen years, even composing music for church services. Ives pursued a very successful career as an insurance actuary and executive but continued to compose until 1927. At that time, he said that he could not compose any longer, and although he revised a few of his compositions in the remaining 27 years of his life, he added no new works. The reasons for this remain obscure. He is reported to have said "nothing sounds right."

The first movement presents the same basic material three times, once with cello and piano, once with violin and piano, and finally with all three. We hear the cello and violin parts separately, and then hear the richness that comes from joining them together. Quotations of familiar tunes, a fraternity song, and even the anthem of a secret society at Yale, animate the lively, sometimes even chaotic, second movement, accurately titled TSIAJ - "This Scherzo Is A Joke." The third movement is the longest, in a much more lyrical, romantic style. Ives' strong use of polyphony continues to emphasize the independence of the three parts, but recurring themes structure the movement, giving it a very different feel from the Scherzo's almost competitive polyphonic medley.

Ives' own comments are a guide to his general conception of the work and its three movements, indicating its relation to Ives' time at Yale:

. . . The Trio was, in a general way . . . a reflection or impression of . . . college days on the Campus. . . The first movement recalled a rather short but serious talk, to those on the Yale fence, by an old professor of Philosophy; the second, the games and antics by the students . . . on a Holiday afternoon; and some of the tunes and songs of those days were . . . suggested in this movement, sometimes in a rough way. The last movement was partly a remembrance of a Sunday Service on the Campus . . . which ended near the "Rock of Ages."

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937): Piano Trio in A minor, M. 67

Ravel's Piano Trio was the last of his great pre-War scores. In fact, he completed the piece in a rush to join the French army in the late summer of 1914. Thankfully, for Ravel and posterity, the army rejected him on grounds he was too slight of build to fight. He served in the Great War as an ambulance driver instead. There is, perhaps in its closing pages, a sense of the heady exuberance that greeted the outbreak of hostilities; otherwise, the Trio stands as an astounding, timeless creation that quickly established itself as one of the leading works in its genre.

Much of the music is informed by gestures found in folk music from Ravel's native Basque region. The first movement, in fact, begins with a Basque-ish rhythmic pattern: a three-plus-three-plus-two grouping that has the effect of completely obscuring the bar line and

any strong sense of meter. Both movement's themes – the first narrow and chromatic, the second folk-like and lyrical – try to counter that feeling, but without complete success: it is a striking, hypnotic movement in large part because of this wonderfully strange rhythmic groove.

The second movement, "Pantoum," continues the play of rhythm while it adapts the Malaysian poetic form from which it derives its title into musical terms. Its two themes – the first, choppy and staccato; the second, a tempestuous waltz – alternate wildly before being interrupted by a broad, expansive trio section.

The Trio's third movement is perhaps the most concise set of variations on a bass line, or passacaglia, as any composer wrote, its ten variations building to a mighty climax before retreating into the sweeping, orchestral-like hues of the finale. The latter wraps up this most phenomenal of chamber scores with gusto: in hindsight, it forms an aptly shining close to the most remarkable chapter of Ravel's career.

Jay Campbell

Cellist Jay Campbell brings his eclectic creative interests to bear in performances that *The New York Times* calls "electrifying", and *The Washington Post* calls "gentle, poignant, and deeply moving." The only musician ever to receive two Avery Fisher Career Grants—in 2016 as a soloist, and again in 2019 as a member of the JACK Quartet—he approaches old and new music with the same curiosity and commitment. Campbell made his debut with the New York Philharmonic in 2013 and worked with Alan Gilbert in 2016 as Artistic Director for Ligeti Forward, a series featured at the New York Philharmonic Biennale at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In 2017, Campbell served as Artist-in-Residence at the Lucerne Festival alongside violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja, with whom he later appeared in recital at New York's Park Avenue Armory and the Ojai Music Festival. Campbell made his Berlin debut in 2018 at the Berlin Philharmonie with Deutsches SymphonieOrchester Berlin. Dedicated to introducing audiences to important contemporary music, Campbell has worked with some of the most creative musicians of our time, including Pierre Boulez, Elliott Carter, Matthias Pintscher, John Adams, Kaija Saariaho, Chaya Czernowin, Georg Friedrich Haas, and many others. His close association with John Zorn led to the 2015 release of *Hen to Pan (Tzadik)*, which featured all works written for Campbell, and was listed in the *New York Times* year-end Best Recordings of 2015. A committed chamber musician, Campbell is a member of the JACK Quartet as well as of the Junction Trio.

Stefan Jackiw

One of America's foremost violinists, Stefan Jackiw captivates audiences by combining poetry and purity with impeccable technique. Praised for playing of "uncommon musical substance" that is "striking for its intelligence and sensitivity" (*Boston Globe*), Jackiw has appeared as soloist with the Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco symphony orchestras, among others. Recent orchestral highlights include Jackiw the Bournemouth Symphony, Helsinki Philharmonic, and the RTÉ National Symphony in Dublin. Past recital highlights include performances of the complete Ives violin Sonatas with Jeremy Denk at Tanglewood and Boston's Jordan Hall, and performance of the complete Brahms violin sonatas, which Jackiw has recorded for Sony. With the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie under Matthias Pintscher, Jackiw gave the world premiere of American composer David Fulmer's Violin Concerto No. 2, "Jubilant Arcs," commissioned for Jackiw by the Heidelberg Festival. Born to physicist parents of Korean and German descent, Jackiw began playing the violin at the age of four. His teachers have included Zinaida Gilels, Michèle Auclair, and Donald Weilerstein. He holds a Bachelor of

Arts from Harvard University and an Artist Diploma from the New England Conservatory, and he lives in New York City.

Conrad Tao

A musician of “probing intellect and open-hearted vision” (*The New York Times*), Conrad Tao has appeared worldwide as a pianist and composer. Named “one of five classical music faces to watch” (*The New York Times*) last season, Tao is a recipient of the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant and a Gilmore Young Artist—an honor awarded every two years to the most promising American pianists of the new generation. In the 2019-2020 season, Tao made his recital debut with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at Walt Disney Hall and was presented in recital by Carnegie Hall and by the Cleveland Orchestra at Severance Hall. Tao’s debut disc, *Voyages*, was declared a “spiky debut” by *The New Yorker*’s Alex Ross, and his second album, *Pictures*, was hailed by *The New York Times* as “a fascinating album [by] a thoughtful artist and dynamic performer...played with enormous imagination, color, and command.” Tao’s third album, *Compassion*, was released in fall of 2019. Tao was born in Urbana, IL in 1994. He has studied piano with Emilio del Rosario in Chicago and Yoheved Kaplinsky in New York, and composition with Christopher Theofanidis.