

**South Bay Chamber Music Society**

April 26 & 28, 2019

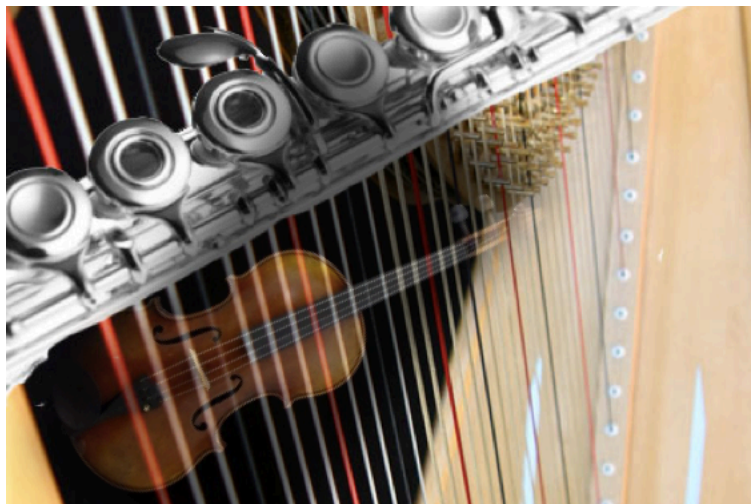
*Trio Ondine*

Alison Bjorkedal, harp

Alma Lisa Fernandez, viola

Boglárka Kiss, flute

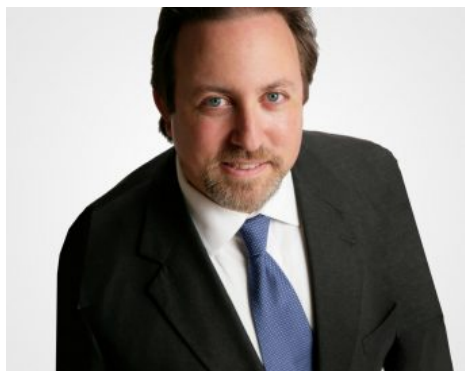
Program Notes by Boglárka Kiss, D.M.A.



Many standard chamber music ensembles, such as the string quartet or piano trio, have long histories with origins that are difficult to pinpoint. Not so with the flute, viola, harp formation: The first major composition written for the group was the *Sonate* by Claude Debussy in 1915. Inspired by the unique timbral possibilities of this trio, countless composers followed in Debussy's footsteps, creating a rich 20<sup>th</sup>-century repertoire for the ensemble. Today's program features works by American, French and German composers, a couple of transcriptions, as well as Debussy's beloved and groundbreaking *Sonate*.

## Aperitif

Lucas Richman (b. 1964)



Lucas Richman is an award-winning conductor and composer who enjoys a diverse career. He has served as Music Director for the Bangor Symphony Orchestra since 2010 and recently completed a 12-year tenure as Music Director for the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra. Mr. Richman received a GRAMMY Award in 2011 for having conducted the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra on Christopher Tin's classical/world fusion album, *Calling All Dawns*. Mr. Richman's numerous collaborations with film composers as their conductor has yielded recorded scores for many films, while his own compositions have been performed by over two hundred orchestras across the United States. He has fulfilled commissions for countless organizations including *Aperitif* for the Debussy Trio. The piece is a buoyant work in a

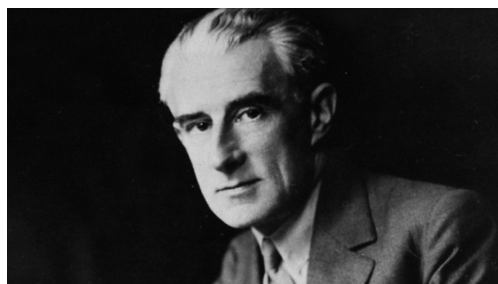
traditional A-B-A form, bound together by rhythmic permutations of a five-note motive, the first of which is heard at the onset of the piece.

For an audio sample of *Aperitif*, please click here: <https://www.ledorgroup.com/product/aperitif/>

## Sonatine

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Maurice Ravel was a French composer, pianist and conductor. He attended the Paris Conservatoire where the conservative faculty treated him quite poorly, causing a scandal. After leaving the Conservatoire, Ravel found his own way as a composer, developing a style of great clarity, incorporating elements of earlier styles and in his later works, jazz.



He is often associated with Impressionism along with his elder contemporary Claude Debussy, although both composers rejected the term. According to many, Debussy was more spontaneous and casual in his composing while Ravel was more attentive to form and craftsmanship. Ravel, twelve years Debussy's junior, had known Debussy since the 1890s, and their friendship, though never close, continued for more than ten years. The two composers ceased to be on friendly terms in the middle of the first decade of the 1900s, for musical and possibly personal reasons. Their admirers began to form factions, with adherents of one composer denigrating the other. The public tension led to personal estrangement. Ravel said, "It's probably better for us, after all, to be on frigid terms for illogical reasons."

Ravel composed the *Sonatine* for solo piano while he was still a student at the Paris Conservatoire. The work has a strange history: Ravel composed the first movement for a contest for a one-movement work of no more than 75 measures sponsored by an arts magazine. The contest was then canceled because Ravel was the only entrant and the magazine was on the verge of bankruptcy. Moreover, Ravel did not adhere to the 75-measure limitation, so he would have been disqualified from the contest on those grounds.

Ravel added two short movements to the original work, which are marked by an austerity of textures and clarity of musical lines. The first movement, *Modéré*, is in sonata form with two contrasting themes, the first presented against a murmuring accompaniment, and the second graver and structured on static chords. The movement is dominated by the interval of a descending fourth, which then appears in the two subsequent movements.

The second movement, *Mouvement de menuet*, has the embellishments and modal inflections of a Baroque dance or processional. The third movement, *Animé*, is in perpetual motion with *agitato* passages that are ornamented with figurations and trills.

The piece has been arranged for various instruments, including for oboe and piano, for flute, cello and harp, and for flute, viola and harp.

To hear a live performance of the flute, viola, harp version of the *Sonatine*, please visit:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5dIXAeshwl4>

## Gwinna

Dave Volpe (b. 1983)



A proud Massachusetts native and brief New Yorker, composer Dave Volpe will always have the soul of an east coaster, but is delighted to call California his home.

During his time in Los Angeles, Dave has written music for multiple feature films, short films and various other media. A graduate of the Scoring for Motion Pictures and Television Program at USC, he was afforded many unique opportunities, including a mentorship with film composer Thomas Newman.

Along with his work in films, Dave is a singer and accomplished choral arranger and composer of concert music for ensembles of various shapes and sizes. In addition to composing, Dave is a comedic actor, a working voiceover artist, an avid cook and baker, a calligrapher, and is a self-proclaimed podcast junkie.

*Gwinna*, scored for flute, viola and harp, makes unusual demands of each musician: All three use extended techniques on their main instrument, and in addition, the flutist doubles on piccolo, rain stick and finger cymbals, the violist plays mark tree, while the harpist is asked to sing. These demands are in the service of depicting the magical story of the heroine in a children's book, *Gwinna*, by Barbara Berger.

Please click the link to hear a recording of Dave's composition:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCcyZ2qk\\_qQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCcyZ2qk_qQ)

## One Triplet

David Walther (b. 1974)

Dave received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in music from the University of Southern California. Since then, he has performed and recorded throughout the world, both as a soloist and with The Debussy Trio. A multi-talented musician, Dave is also a prolific composer whose influences range from past and present classical music to rock, pop, hip-hop, rap and jazz.



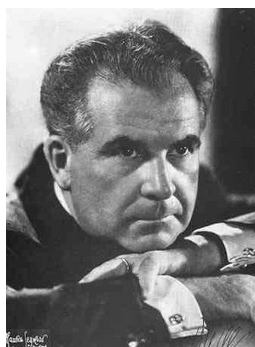
Dave describes *One Triplet* as follows, “[The work] was written for my two friends and Debussy Trio mates, Angela and Marcia. I've been a member of the trio for many years, and the time we've spent together around music has always been filled with good spirits, humor, and candor.

When I set out to write this piece I wanted to find a unique homogeneity of sound, and I sought to give the three instruments equal shares of melodious and accompanimental material. The macro structure of the piece is A-B-A form. The 'B' section which is lyrical and melodramatic is contrasted by two lighthearted and energetic 'A' sections. The title refers simply to the existence of one triplet in the music, which can be heard towards the end of the piece in the flute part.”

To listen to *One Triplet*, please visit: <https://soundcloud.com/user-720683772/david-walther-one-triplet>

## Petite Suite

Andre Jolivet (1905-1974)



André Jolivet has been called French music's most sophisticated primitivist. Interested in drama, painting and literature in his youth, he eventually settled on music, studying cello and composition.

His early works tend to be dense and atonal. However, during his service in the French Army in World War II, he grew interested in primitive religion and magic, and this intellectual quest soon informed his style. He stated his intention as “restoring music's original ancient sense, as the magical and incantatory expression of the religiosity of human communities. Music should be a sonorous manifestation directly related to the universal cosmic system.”

The *Petite Suite*, with its exotic melodies, rich harmonies and powerful rhythmic impulses, is part of this magical style. The work is in five short movements, each evoking dances from various eras, styles, and locations.

Jolivet's body of works reflects his wide range of interests: He wrote ballets, symphonies, concertos, incidental music, choral works, songs, and chamber music. At his death he was regarded, with Olivier Messiaen, as one of the leading figures in contemporary French music.

You may hear *Petite Suite* here:

<https://www.earsense.org/chamber-music/Andre-Jolivet-Petite-suite/?ri=16>

## **Triosonate in g minor, TWV 42:g7**

Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767)



Telemann was a German Baroque composer and multi-instrumentalist. Almost completely self-taught in music, he became a composer against his family's wishes. He settled in Hamburg in 1721, where he became musical director of that city's five main churches. As part of his duties, he wrote a considerable amount of music for educating organists under his direction. His music incorporates French, Italian, and German national styles, and he was at times even influenced by Polish popular music. Throughout his career, Telemann remained at the forefront of all new musical developments, and his music stands as an important link between the late Baroque and early Classical styles.

Telemann is one of the most prolific composers in Western art music history and was considered by his contemporaries to be one of the leading German composers of the time—he was compared favorably both to his friend Johann Sebastian Bach, who made Telemann the godfather and namesake of his son Carl Philipp Emanuel, and to George Frideric Handel, whom Telemann also knew personally.

While Telemann's career prospered, his personal life was often troubled: His first wife died only a few months after their wedding, and his second wife had extramarital affairs and accumulated a large gambling debt before leaving him.

Consulting historical sources, the original instrumentation of the *Triosonata in g minor* seems to be under dispute: Its two melodic lines may have been intended for violin or flute, and cello or viola da gamba. Be it as it may, the cello/gamba part is unusual for its time, with its soloistic role, and its near-constant dialogue with the other melodic line. What is not under dispute is the presence of the harpsichord, providing the basso line. The work displays the strong influence of the Italian style, and features four brief movements of festive character.

The viola da gamba is a bowed, fretted and stringed instrument with a hollow wooden body. It was most popular in the Renaissance and Baroque periods. Although the instrument resembles the cello, the viol is different in numerous respects from instruments of the violin family: The viol has a flat rather than curved back, sloped rather than rounded shoulders, c holes rather than f holes, and five to seven, rather than four, strings. All members of the viol family are played upright. All viol instruments are held between the legs like a modern cello, hence the Italian name viola da gamba (“viol for the leg”). This distinguishes the viol from the modern violin family, the viola da braccio (“viol for the arm”).



True to the flexibility of instrumentation often allowed in the Baroque period, today you will hear the work performed on flute, viola, and harp.

To hear snippets of each movement, please click here: <http://sheetmusicbyfatrock.com/product/baroque-the-debussy-trio-2/>



## Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp, L. 145

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)



The last years of Debussy's life were decidedly difficult. He underwent debilitating treatment for cancer, witnessed the devastation of World War I, and struggled financially. Nevertheless, in 1915, Debussy set out to write *Six Sonatas for Various Instruments*. He completed three of the six works before his death in 1918: the *Sonata for Cello and Piano*, the *Sonata for Flute, Viola* (originally oboe) *and Harp*, and the *Sonata for Violin and Piano*. The fourth and fifth sonatas were planned for oboe, horn and harpsichord, and for trumpet, clarinet, bassoon and piano. For the sixth work, Debussy had hoped to combine the instruments used in the first five sonatas.

For the inspiration, style, and temperament of the *Sonata for Flute, Viola, and Harp*, Debussy looked back to the elegance, emotional reserve and textural clarity of the music of the French Baroque. In its revival of old techniques and modes of expression dressed in 20th-century harmonies, the piece is one of the early examples of the Neo-Classical movement that touched so many composers during the following decades. Indeed, with its ambiguous harmonies, austere textures and meticulously carved instrumental sonorities, it is one of Debussy's most uncompromisingly modern creations, devoid of any representational "impressionistic" character—a term the composer despised.

The Sonata's ethereal opening movement, titled *Pastorale*, unfolds as a series of episodes based on themes that at first hearing sound little more than wispy ornamental figures. There are however, five fragmentary but distinct thematic entities here, which are later revisited in a different order to round out the movement's form: 1) and 2) two melancholy strains that introduce the flute and the viola; 3) an open-interval, drone-like motive for viola and harp; 4) a lyrical melody in the flute's lower register supported by arching arpeggios in the viola, and 5) an animated ensemble passage in an uneven meter. The motives are heard at the end of the movement in this order: 2-4-5-3-1. The atmosphere, seemingly relaxed, is charged with a sense of repressed passion towards the end: A well-placed pause, for instance, is bursting with psychological tension and dramatic impact.

Though the *Interlude*, in the old form of the minuet, is Debussy's most obvious tribute to the music of the Baroque, its whole-tone theme, parallel chord streams, and modal harmonies mark this as a product of the 20th century. The movement presents the triple-meter minuet three times, with each presentation separated by a vaguely duple-meter episode.

The *Finale* demonstrates the reason for Debussy's decision to abandon the sonata's original scoring—flute, oboe, and harp, and replace the oboe with the viola. The movement brilliantly grows from mutations of the three motives that are presented in quick succession at the outset: snapping viola pizzicatos, rapid lines from the flute, and a longer viola melody anxiously juxtaposing duple and triple rhythms. Without the viola's poignant pizzicatos, the finale would lose much of its essential character, and its opening would be unrecognizable. As the movement nears its end, the tempo slows to recall the flute theme that opened the first movement before a short, animated coda closes the Sonata.

Debussy himself expressed some uncertainty regarding the emotional effect of the work, "[The music is] so terribly melancholy," he wrote to his friend the Swiss journalist Robert Godet, "that I can't say whether one should laugh or cry. Perhaps both at the same time?"

Here is an iconic recording of the piece from 1954 (Julius Baker, flute; Lillian Fuchs, viola; and Laura Newell, harp): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FU9koaYC5zE>

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