

TonTrio in concert

September 9, 2010 by Luis Dias

By Dr. Luis Dias

TonTrio, a young piano trio from Germany will be in concert at the Panjim (Immaculate Conception) Church on Monday, 6 September 2010, 7 pm. Their concert programme features the following works: Beethoven *Piano Trio no. 6 in E flat major, op. 70 no. 2*; Shostakovich *Trio no. 1 in C major, op. 8*; and Robert Schumann *Piano Trio in F major, op. 80*.

In 1808, Beethoven rented lodging in the apartments of one of his best friends and confidantes, and a fervent fan of his music, one Countess Marie von Erdödy. This trio was among the works he dedicated to her in gratitude. The Opus 70 trios marked a return of the composer's attention to the intimacy and intricacy of chamber music. The featured four-movement work opens with a slow introduction, unusually for Beethoven in his compositions for piano trio, followed by a Haydnian faster section. Another point worth noting in this work is the use of "double", or "alternating" variations (theme and variations, but involving two themes A & B, alternately e.g. AA1BA2B1, instead of one) in the second movement. This is a musical form that Joseph Haydn often employed, and it is thought that Beethoven pays homage to him in this manner. If so, it is all the more remarkable because Haydn had in 1795 listened to a play-through of an earlier piano trio by Beethoven and felt it was unworthy of publication! Perhaps they had mended fences since then?

The name Dmitri Shostakovich immediately conjures up the spectre of Soviet dictator Josef Stalin, the totalitarian state, and the trampling of human rights and creativity. It is hard to divorce Shostakovich's often austere music soundscape from this tortured context. But here's our chance. In the featured work, we encounter none of all that, but just a young teenager in love. The object of his affection was the vivacious Tatyana Glivenko, daughter of a Moscow philologist and the love of Dmitri's life for over a decade. Originally titled "Poème" this quarter-hour, one-movement work is a paean to love, both sacred and sensual, and has been described as "arguably the most romantic and Romantic work Shostakovich ever wrote".

1847 was a somewhat lean period in Robert Schumann's compositional career. Seven years into his marriage to Clara, he had just recovered from another episode of what was then termed as "nervous prostration". Nevertheless, the first two of his three Piano Trios were written in this year. Although widely considered a weaker work than the First, the four-movement Trio No. 2 is however an extravert and wholly happy work. TonTrio (Julia Kraus, piano; Karlotta Schmied, violin; Daniel Haverkamp, cello) was founded in 2006 in the Hochschule für Musik in Karlsruhe, Germany. At that time the violinist was Eva Maria Vischi; Schmied has come into the ensemble earlier this year.

Since 2009, they have been working with the acclaimed Alban Berg Quartet in the Musikhochschule Köln and with Dirk Mommertz (pianist of the Fauré Piano Quartet) and Vladimir Mendelssohn (violinist of the London String Quartet) in Essen. They have already attracted much acclaim in the European press, and are now on their first tour of India. Goa is the last stop on their itinerary, which also included Delhi, Mumbai and Pune.

So there you have it... Shostakovich in love, Beethoven in a forgiving mood, and Schumann in one of his happier moments. You would be hard put to find a better way to spend a monsoon evening.

For more details, please call 2425023

(This article appeared in the Herald Mirror, Goa India on 6 September 2010)