



# Music on the Hill

## — **Big Sky** —

November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, 2:15 p.m.

Cecilia Belcher, violin

Richard Belcher, cello

Bethel Balge, piano

Introduction by Artistic Director, Richard Belcher

Piano Trio No. 1 in D Minor, op. 49.....Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

*Molto allegro ed agitato*

*Andante con moto tranquillo*

*Scherzo-Leggero e vivace*

*Finale-Allegro assai appassionato*

A closing word from MSO Board Member, Jenn Faust

## Program Notes

by Dr. Stephanie Thorpe

### Piano Trio, Op. 49 in D Minor Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

A musical prodigy, Mendelssohn grew up in a wealthy family in which both he and his sister, Fanny, were well-educated and composed many beautiful instrumental and vocal works. In his short life, several of his works attained popularity and were played often. While he was not as flamboyant and prolific as many of his contemporaries, Mendelssohn was hailed as the “Mozart of the 19th century, the most brilliant of musicians, the one who most clearly perceives the contradictions of the age, and the first to reconcile them,” by Robert Schumann in a review of this piano trio.

Deeply romantic with utterly singable motives, each instrument holds equal sway within this dramatic first movement, often trading melodic and harmonic details with each other. The second movement is slow and melancholy, beginning with the piano moving in lilting musical sequences until the violin and cello enter with the same exquisite melodic motive. A passionate midsection leads the movement back to a delicate restatement of the opening theme that leads to exchanging cadenzas between the violin, cello, and piano. The Scherzo is fast, light, and equally spirited between all instruments with motivic materials that resemble the arching melodies of the first movement. The Finale, aptly marked *Allegro assai appassionato*, begins with a frenzied piano line that quickly transfers to the violin and cello lines. Interrupted by brief cantabile moments, the tempestuous and lyrical thematic materials heard throughout this trio swirl and float like autumn leaves in this last ardent movement.

## Musician Bios



Cecilia Belcher, violin



Richard Belcher, cello



Bethel Balge, piano

### Cecilia Belcher

Violinist Cecilia Belcher joined the Minnesota Orchestra in fall 2014 and was named Assistant Principal Second Violin in January 2017. Previously, she performed regularly with the St. Louis Symphony and has also performed with the Pittsburgh and Houston Symphony Orchestras. She is principal second violin of the River Oaks Chamber Orchestra in Houston. As concertmaster, she has led the Reno Philharmonic, New World Symphony, Aspen Music Festival Opera Orchestra and Mississippi Valley Orchestra. Music festivals in which she has participated include Aspen, Banff, Beijing International Music Festival, Tanglewood and Verbier. In addition, she has toured Germany and the U.S. with the New York City-based chamber orchestra The Knights.

A St. Louis native, Belcher began violin studies at the age of three. She earned a bachelor's degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music, where she studied with Paul Kantor, and a master's degree from the Shepherd School of Music, studying with Kathleen Winkler. She and her husband Richard Belcher, a cellist in the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, love living in Minneapolis with their two young children.

### Richard Belcher

New Zealand cellist Richard Belcher joined the SPCO in 2019 after a twenty-year career as founding cellist of the Grammy-nominated Enso String Quartet. With the quartet he earned highly critical accolades from recording and concertizing in many of the world's major concert halls such as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and Kennedy Center in the United States, as well as abroad in Europe, South America, Australia and New Zealand.

Richard is the Artistic Director of Music on the Hill in Mankato, Minnesota, and since 2008 has been Principal Cellist of River Oaks Chamber Orchestra in Houston, Texas. He has taught and performed at many festivals including St. Bart's, Festival d'Aix en Provence, Prussia Cove, Madeline Island, Campos do Jordao International Winter Festival, SummerFest La Jolla, and the San Miguel de Allende International Chamber Music Festival.

In demand as a teacher and chamber music coach, Richard has previously served as Adjunct Faculty at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music and has given numerous masterclasses around the world. Richard moved to the United States in 1998 to study with Aldo Parisot at Yale University, and it was while there that he founded the Enso String Quartet. Richard's other principal teachers include Norman Fischer, Marc Johnson, and Alexander Ivashkin. He plays an N.F. Vuillaume cello made in 1856, and is married to Cecilia Belcher, Assistant Principal 2nd Violin of the Minnesota Orchestra.

### Bethel Balge

Winner of the Louis B. Sudler Prize in the Arts and of the McKnight sponsored Artist Grant, pianist Bethel Balge has performed in Germany, including at Frankfurt's Alte Oper, in Russia as soloist with the Voronezh Philharmonic, as well as in various American venues. Balge's "highly concentrated, technically secure and captivating interpretation" of Ravel's Gaspard de la Nuit attracted notice from a reviewer at the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung after a performance at the Alte Oper. As a doctoral student of Lydia Artymiw, Balge performed in a Minnesota Public Radio live broadcast in the Bach Birthday concert organized by MPR host Michael Barone. She is founding Artistic Director of the Summit Avenue Music Chamber Music Series and Co-Artistic Director with Peter McGuire of the ProMusica Chamber Music Festival. After six years in Germany, Balge received a *Diplom* degree from the University of Frankfurt's Staatliche Hochschule fuer Musik und darstellende Kunst. Previously she received her Master of Music M.M. from the University of Wisconsin under Howard Karp. She is a cum laude graduate (Bachelor of Music) of Michigan State University, where she studied under Van Cliburn gold prize winner Ralph Votapek. Balge teaches piano and music history courses at Bethany Lutheran College (Mankato, MN) and is executive director of the Mankato Symphony Orchestra.

## Thank you to our Program Sponsors!



This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Prairie Lakes Regional Arts Council, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

This project is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

## Keep up to date on all things MSO by subscribing to our e-newsletter and social media platforms!

