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A POTENT MIX: “MUSIC, MARTINIS AND THE MAESTRO”

Cal Phil’s popular afternoon chamber music series at the historic Green Hotel will present “Three’s Company” – featuring pianist Ayke Agus, violinist Irina Voloshina and cellist Dennis Karmazyn in a performance of Brahms’ Piano Trio No. 1 and Shostakovich’s Piano Trio No. 2 – on Sunday, March 2

SAN MARINO, Calif. When the California Philharmonic presents “Three’s Company” – the latest in its popular chamber music series, *Music, Martinis and the Maestro*, at the historic Green Hotel in Pasadena – on Sunday, March 2 at 2 p.m., it will undoubtedly include moments as uproarious as the popular 70s sitcom, thanks to Music Director Victor Vener’s renowned ability not only to conduct but to share a great joke or two with an audience. Yet this Cal Phil version of “Three’s Company” will also ‘star’ three members of the orchestra who have received serious acclaim worldwide for their artistry – pianist Ayke Agus, violinist Irina Voloshina and cellist Dennis Karmazyn – in a performance of Brahms’ *Piano Trio No. 1 in B Major* and Shostakovich’s *Piano Trio No. 2 in E minor*.

Music, Martinis and the Maestro offers the audience exactly what its name promises. In the Green Hotel’s Romanesque Room, guests can sip a martini or glass of wine prior to the performance while mingling with their fellow guests. They will also find themselves, however, rubbing elbows with the musicians and Maestro Vener.

“I’ve performed with both Ayke and Irina in chamber ensembles,” says Vener, who plays the French Horn. “And I’ve learned that they are not only wonderful artists but two of the most thoughtful and intelligent musical scholars I’ve ever known. Because of the intimacy of its setting – chamber music was never meant for large concert halls – *Music, Martinis and the Maestro* will provide the audience with a chance to get to know Ayke, Irina and Dennis as I have, as gifted artists and unique individuals with their own history and stories to tell.”

Pianist and violinist Ayke Agus first caught the attention of the world-renowned Russian violinist Jascha Heifetz after substituting as accompanist at one of his Master Classes. Heifetz was so impressed that he hired Agus as his own accompanist, a partnership that lasted for the remaining fifteen years of his life. Since that time, Agus has performed with such internationally recognized ensembles as the Beaux Arts Trio, Ysaÿe String Quartet and Jacques Thibaud String Trio.

Critics have been equally impressed by Agus' talent. Of her playing the LA Times wrote, "Agus is exceptionally fluent, graceful and accurate...the sort of easygoing, technically whiz-bang pianist that other pianists talk about with awe."

Like Agus' former partner Jascha Heifetz, violinist Irina Voloshina was born in Russia. After graduating from the Odessa Conservatory, she served as Assistant Concertmaster for the Odessa Philharmonic and appeared as a soloist throughout the Soviet Union and Europe. In 1993, Voloshina settled in Southern California, where she soon became one of the area's most active violinists, performing not only with the California Philharmonic but The Pasadena Symphony, the Santa Barbara Symphony, Opera Pacific, the La Mirada Symphony, the Mozart Classical Symphony, the Santa Cecilia Chamber Orchestra and the Pacific Palisades Symphony. She also served as Principal Second Violin during the Yanni Orchestra's World Tour, accompanied Andrea Bocelli on a tour of the U.S. and was a member of the orchestra for the 75th and 77th Academy Awards.

In the recording studio, Voloshina has worked with such composers as John Williams, James Newton Howard, Jerry Goldsmith, Alan Silvestri, James Horner, and Hans Zimmer. She appears in music videos as well and is credited on numerous album recordings.

As a young cellist, Dennis Karmazyn – who made his debut performance with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at age 16 and has since appeared as a soloist with such major orchestras as the New York Philharmonic and the London Symphony, earning praise from the New York Times for his "brilliance and sparkle, subtle tone, command, intensity and breadth" – used to play chamber music with Ayke Agus and Jascha Heifetz.

"Years later, they got back together through Cal Phil," says Vener. "And here they are, playing chamber music together once again."

Brahms first wrote the Piano Trio No. 1 when he was 22 years old. Thirty-five years later, true to form – throughout his life, Brahms was his own fiercest critic – he revised the trio, significantly shortening it and altering all but one movement.

"Brahms would always say that he didn't give the trio a 'new wig.' He simply 'combed its hair,' " says Karmazyn. "But, however you describe it, the Trio as we hear it today is a novel way to experience Brahms. In one work, you hear both the promising young composer *and* the mature genius at the height of his powers."

Power – specifically, the abuse of it – is an underlying theme in Shostakovich's *Piano Trio No. 2*. Although Shostakovich wrote it to express his grief over the death of his great friend Ivan Sollertinsky, many believe that the inclusion of a Jewish death dance in the finale also allowed Shostakovich to express his horror at learning what had taken place at Nazi death camps.

"As a musician composing under Stalin, Shostakovich was forced to write the music the communist party wanted to hear," Voloshina explains. "Yet, while his works were formally approved, many contained hidden meanings. The second Piano Trio is Shostakovich's statement of unity with other victims of persecution."

At the concert, Voloshina promises, she will share with the audience her own intensely personal reaction, as a Russian and as a musician, to Shostakovich's work.

"But I'm not telling any more right now," she says with a smile. "You'll have to join us."

Tickets for Cal Phil Music, Martinis, and the Maestro start at just \$30/person. For more information or to order tickets, visit www.calphil.org or call 626.300.8200. The box office is located at 1120 Huntington Drive in San Marino and is open Monday through Friday, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The Green Hotel is located at 50 East Green Street in Pasadena.

In 1995, Music Director and Conductor Victor Vener and a small group of enthusiastic, dedicated music lovers based in Pasadena, California founded the The CalPhil Foundation. The Foundation, a nonprofit community benefit organization, supports the California Philharmonic in its quest to expand awareness of classical music, thus increasing the interest and support for great timeless music with wide audience appeal, from the classical and operatic repertoire to diverse genres of jazz, pops, Hollywood and Broadway. Also, with a strong commitment to new music and to expanding the symphonic repertoire, the California Philharmonic has presented numerous world premieres of both orchestral and chamber works.

The California Philharmonic began in 1997 with a five-concert inaugural summer season of Cal Phil Festival on the Green on the grounds of the Los Angeles County Arboretum & Botanic Garden in Arcadia. Now, Cal Phil presents twenty four concerts per year in five different, but equally impressive, venues throughout Los Angeles County. These series include Cal Phil at Walt Disney Concert Hall (downtown Los Angeles), Cal Phil at the Ambassador (Pasadena), Cal Phil Music, Martinis and the Maestro (Castle Green Hotel in Pasadena) and Cal Phil at The Mill (The Old Mill in San Marino). For more information, visit www.calphil.org or call 626.300.8200.

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