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MUSIC

81st Season
Three Hundred Eighty Eighthth Concert
of the Society

Claremont Trio

Emily Bruskin, *violin*
Julia Bruskin, *cello*
Andrea Lam, *piano*



TREYTON OAK
TOWERS

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March 3, 2019
3:00 p.m.
Comstock Concert Hall

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PROGRAM

Trio No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 63 (1847)

Robert Schumann
(1810-1856)

Mit energie und Leidenschaft
Lebhaft, doch nicht zu rasch
Langsam, mit inniger Empfindung
Mit Feuer

Trio (2012)*

Sean Shepherd
(b. 1979)

Florid Hopscotch
Calderwood
Slow waltz of the robots

Composed for the Claremont Trio

INTERMISSION

Trio No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 49 (1839)

Felix Mendelssohn
(1809-1847)

Molto allegro e agitato
Andante con moto tranquillo
Scherzo: Leggiero e vivace
Finale: Allegro assai appassionato

*--indicates a first presentation for the Society

The Claremont Trio appears by arrangement with Arts Twenty Eight
www.artstwentyeight.com

The Claremont Trio received the first Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson
International Trio Award in 2003
www.claremonttrio.com

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Chamber Music Society of Louisville is supported by the generosity of numerous individuals and organizations that join in its purpose of presenting performances of the world's best chamber music by its most renowned artists. The Board of Trustees thanks all who contribute to this effort and help bring meaningful music to our community:

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*The pre-concert discussion will be presented by Dr. Devin Burke,
Assistant Professor in the Department of Music History,
in Room 130 beginning at 2 PM. All are welcome to join in the conversation.*

Gerhard Herz was a long-time beloved faculty member of the University of Louisville School of Music and an invaluable supporter of the Chamber Music Society. Before his death in 2000, Gerhard made a gift to the Society to insure that both the number of concerts as well as the quality of musicians be maintained for five years. Emilie Strong Smith was an involved and generous Chamber Music Society supporter for many decades. In honor of these individuals, the top contributors category has been designated the Gerhard Herz-Emilie Strong Smith Sustainers.

To discuss serving on a committee or making a monetary donation of any size, please contact Cecilia Huerta-Lauf at (615) 417-2110. Donations and ticket purchases can be made online at: louisvillechambermusic.eventbrite.com

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Next Chamber Music Society Concert

April 7, 2019 - 3:00 p.m.

Dover Quartet

Claremont Trio

Emily Bruskin, *violin*

Julia Bruskin, *cello*

Andrea Lam, *piano*

Trio in D Minor, Op. 63

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Mit Energie und Leidenschaft

With energy and passion

Lebhaft, doch nicht zu rasch

Lively, though not too fast

Langsam, mit inniger Empfindung- Bewegter - Tempo I - attacca

Slow, with inner expression - Faster - Tempo I - no pause

Mit Feuer, Nach und nach schneller

With fire, faster and faster

Perhaps the most interesting composer of the early Romantic generation, Robert Schumann was an individual with rare capabilities. He began composing at the age of seven, wrote and published his first essay on the aesthetics of music at the age of 14, and, inspired by Jean Paul, wrote his first novel at the age of 16. He began a study of law, but in 1830 after hearing a performance by the virtuoso violinist, Nicolò Paganini, he decided on a career in music. When a hand injury determined against his future as a pianist, he turned to musical composition. With very little formal training in composition, his early works, particularly for the piano, were wonderfully intense, infused with his literary fantasy. As an adult he committed to serious study of the musical forms and techniques and he continued to write, having co-established the outstanding music journal, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, in 1834. After a spate of composing Lieder he turned to instrumental genres, first to the symphony and then to chamber music. The Trio in D minor was not one of the very early chamber works, but it was not one of his latest either. While the work is a serious treatment of the genre, the ideas often diverge from the “classic” exposition of form and style. It has the classical four-movement structure, but here and there the realization of the plan is decidedly idiosyncratic.

The opening starts out in midair—alone in the violin—a pitch taken from the bottom of its range, as it were “out of thin air.” Joined immediately in the next measure by the piano with an urgent rhythmic pattern, the line swells upward. With its chromatic inflections, this is the quintessential melody in search of a resting place, a cadential relief. And it finds it not, even after the third try. The exposition plays out as expected in the classical form: following a brief transition to the key of the relative F Major, it comes to a close with a new theme that returns ever so briefly to the original opening theme, this time in F Major, thus preparing both a repeat of the exposition and a transition into the development. Overall, the movement traces the outline of a classical sonata form, though without the tightness that comes from rhythmically defined musical phrases and firm cadences. But then, there is a real surprise in

the development, where Schumann, after revisiting the upward surging lines (sometimes in canon between violin and either the bass line of the piano or the cello), after coming almost to a standstill, and after revisiting sequences of dotted rhythms, brings the music literally to a standstill—and introduces a completely new theme, even, one has to say, a new kind of music brought in, mid-development. Everything stops, and then, as if from a far distant space, “Tempo I? ma però più calmo, sul ponticello” in the strings, “una corda, ppp” in the piano, a simplified theme totally unrelated to anything that has gone before emerges seemingly from nowhere. Is it perhaps a vision on the other side of a turbulent life? Gradually—bit by bit—with each approach, the elusiveness dissipates, the “vision” is cropped; with each repetition it comes closer, becomes absorbed, and is gone when the recapitulation begins. Only a very tiny reference returns briefly in the final measures of the movement.

At first the musical themes of the scherzo seem devoid of any character at all. They are principally lines that rise the interval of a fourth and fall back down in 4-measure phrases. Then, dotted rhythms and some cadences with hemiola passages start animating the central section, preparing for a rhythmically invigorated final section. The trio is a step still further into the drawn-down simplification of the lines from the scherzo; as they continually move up and down scales—smoothly in canon—completely without any rhythmic character. It’s just plain odd.

With the slow movement, we enter quite another emotional space—a heartfelt, even desperate, lament for the violin—much like a recitative with its own inner rhythm, speech-like. When the cello enters the tale, it is as if a consoling voice invites conversation. Later on the music gains some momentum, but, then again, the energy fails and the lament returns and having nothing more to say, the two voices drop their conversation. The piano takes up the thread to no avail, ending the movement unresolved...

The last movement, now in tonic D Major, is full of rhythmic complexities, dramatic action, and plenty of thematic variety. Schumann both derives themes from the opening material and recalls themes from the first movement, thus bringing the work full circle and to a high-spirited end.

Trio (2012)

Sean Shepherd (b. 1979)

I. Florid Hopscotch

II. Calderwood

III. Slow Waltz of the Robots

Sean Shepherd has been a familiar name for audiences of major ensembles for number of years now, since about 2010, when his work became ear-marked for broad acceptance. Major orchestras and other ensembles, here and abroad, began offering performances of his music on their season programs, tours and festivals. He has won many awards, been composer in residence in some interesting places, and he can be found on the internet engaging with conductors and other musicians. Sean Shepherd, who is originally from Reno, Nevada, studied

composition at Indiana University with Claude Baker and David Dzubay. From there he went to Juilliard for his Master's degree and then completed a Doctorate in Composition at Cornell University where he studied with Roberto Sierra and Steven Stucky. In January 2012, Trio was commissioned for the Claremont Trio to celebrate the opening of Calderwood Hall, the Renzo Piano-designed addition to the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, as described in the composer's own comment:

I decided on a simple enough title for this piece early on: Trio. It's meant to reflect both the number of players and the number of movements that make up the piece. The names of movements themselves might leave one more curious than a quick glance at the title might reveal, and each movement does its best to stand alone, but in my mind these relatively short statements, taken together, make a complete musical paragraph.

It's a piece for an occasion, and one for which I was very happy to contribute: the first concerts in a new concert hall in Boston at the Isabella Stuart Gardner Museum, for the Claremont Trio, old friends and players I knew well. I scoured and researched on the internet, found the design plans of the architect, Renzo Piano, and watched the building grow in photos as I worked at home in Brooklyn. I was taken with the unusual shape of the hall, a vertical cube with four wrapping balcony levels hovering nearly directly over a square stage. The result, as I imagined: there is no front or back, left or right in what was eventually named Calderwood Hall. There is only up and down. I approached the second movement as a metaphor of homage to the hall: most of movement is vertical in nature, as was the intent. While I had focused on technical issues in composing the music, upon hearing it, I was surprised to find I'd hidden my engineering, those load-bearing columns, behind a skin that formed while I wasn't looking. It was only as a listener that I realized the music in "Calderwood" formed the emotional core of Trio.

"Florid Hopscotch" serves as the intrada, albeit a slightly confused or frustrated one: a leaping staccato gesture starting in the piano argues for prominence with long flowing lines in the strings. "Slow waltz of the robots" is a pretty blunt take on something that, depending one's view of such things, might be anywhere from sadly beautiful to horrifying and grotesque. Perhaps the music finds its way toward a bit of both, but the image hit me like a flash after I'd written the last note. I don't like spoilers, but I'm inclined give this away: any battery-powered objects that would take it upon themselves to attempt such a charmingly useless human act as dancing would likely get a sympathetic view from me, at least until those batteries run out. — Sean Shepherd

If you have a moment and are not acquainted with Calderwood Hall, search for Calderwood Hall Gardner Museum on the internet to discover a most unusual

design, one that would challenge any composer to think about how music would be perceived by individuals seated in this very unusual concert hall.

The introductory first movement is an intriguing three-part exposition of melodic ideas and patterns featuring a fairly consistent harmony with a strong tendency toward major intervals. Beginning “Brisk, though not driving,” the delicate introductory material explores chords in the piano and streaming phrases in the strings. Eventually the piano is drawn into the flurry of the strings and tension and interest builds and then subsides, as two passages dissolve into simplified textures: “More relaxed,” then “Still slower”; the whole piece is eventually reduced to very plain intervals and minimal movement.

As Shepherd comments, the second movement is dominated by rising intervals (particularly rising 3rds). First the violin, then the cello solo pursue winding melodic phrases. More or less strict ostinatos in the piano, sustain the violin’s and the cello’s rising explorations; dynamics are overall very nuanced and quiet. The end is like the beginning.

The third movement begins with an explosive gesture in all three instruments. This is the longest and perhaps most “eccentric” of the three pieces. Following the short introduction, three principal segments each with distinctive patterns play out until the first returns to bring the movement to a wind-down finish.

Trio in D Minor, Op. 49

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (1809-1847)

Molto allegro ed agitato

Andante con moto tranquillo

Scherzo. Leggiero e vivace

Finale. Allegro assai appassionato

Some details of Mendelssohn’s extraordinary background bear repeating. His grandfather was Moses Mendelssohn, the noted Jewish philosopher who articulated the philosophical framework for the “Jewish enlightenment” of the 18th-19th and Moses Mendelssohn was Lessing’s model for his Nathan the Wise. He was also successful in the textile industry and in banking, and provided a wealthy foundation for the family into which Felix Mendelssohn was born. A privileged upbringing in a cultivated household enabled the development of Mendelssohn’s multiple gifts as a linguist, painter, musical scholar, pianist, conductor and composer. During his short life, he was successful in many pursuits. A very good conductor and a serious student of music of great composers, he initiated the revival of performance of works by Bach and Handel, and, an enlightened educator, he founded and established the Conservatory in Leipzig as a leading institution in Germany. He left something like 750 compositions, the complete list of which only came available in the late 1960s. A complete edition of his music will comprise some 150 volumes.

The Trio in D Minor for piano, violin and cello was composed in 1839 during the very successful years in Leipzig. His initial treatment of the work was restrained but he accepted the advice of a friend and revised the piano part to be much more robust and brilliant, encouraging Robert Schumann’s famous

comment: “He is the Mozart of the nineteenth century, the brightest musician, who most clearly understands the contradictions of the age and is the first to reconcile them.”

This Trio might be used to demonstrate Schumann’s insightful comment, for while it is brilliant with romantic style in both melodic design and harmony, formally the structure bears the impact of the composer’s deep understanding of the use and purpose of the principles of classical structure. Mendelssohn does not “classicize,” but rather puts classical principles to work in the romantic landscape of a broadly conceived framework and creates a work that does indeed reconcile the contradictions between romantic and classical style.

In the first movement, he achieves this in a number of ways, the most striking of which is his presentation of the first thematic material. The cello opens the movement with a long arching melody--in two expanding 8-measure phrases--that ends on the dominant. The violin takes up the initial rising interval, continuing the upward trajectory with each new phrase and concludes on the tonic, as the piano enters--essentially as a soloist with new ideas. It brings fresh new harmony in sweeping broken chords, a new line of descending chords and a cadential phrase featuring a dotted rhythm, in short, introducing elements that contrast well with the romantic character of the opening phrases. The melodic and harmonic elements are Romantic but the new material introduced by the piano balances the form. As it plays out, the first movement is a full-bodied sonata form with the highly contrasting second theme in the dominant major. Following the extensive development, Mendelssohn abbreviates the recapitulation and closes with an exuberant coda.

The second movement is familiar territory to anyone who knows any of Mendelssohn’s *Songs Without Words*. A three-part form with a three-part contrasting middle section, it never rises to any emotional high, but then it doesn’t need to. Listen for the subtle changes in texture with the return of the main theme when it receives a wholly new treatment as a final statement and eventually dissolves into slow tremolos in the strings.

The Scherzo is a tour-de-force of delicate writing, the kind that Mendelssohn mastered. The initial phrase in the piano is a kind of 8-measure refrain that sets the pace with its spirited opening octave-leap and its delightful hemiola rhythm (the “tripping” figure that finishes at the end of the tune). These features that dominate the movement are only briefly set aside by the tunes in the contrasting segments.

The last movement is a sonata rondo in which the major themes all use a dactylic rhythm (usually long-short-short, sometimes short-short-long) that combines with the minor mode to give the movement a driving, serious, even dark affect. The writing for all the instruments, but in particular for the piano, with its manifold variety and virtuosic invention counteracts the somber aspect of the rhythmic pattern. Eventually the mode changes to major, and the piece closes with explosively brilliant passage work. – Dr. Jean Christensen