

Concerts at the Point

20TH SEASON 2016-2017

presents ...

THE CLAREMONT TRIO

FEBRUARY 26, 2017, 3:00 PM

1912 MAIN ROAD, WESTPORT POINT, MASSACHUSETTS

THE IMAGE ON THE COVER IS AN OIL PAINTING TITLED OFF SHORE by Brenda Figuerido. Ms. Figuerido grew up on Cape Cod, received a BA from UMass Dartmouth and subsequently followed a career as an artist in the service of science. As a visual information specialist for the National Marine Fisheries Service, she spent extensive time at sea, often offshore for weeks, documenting scientific findings. She utilized an agreed upon language of symbols to translate data into graphical representation for a wide variety of audiences, including scientists, managers, decision-makers and laymen. Since her retirement, she has dedicated her time to more abstract and personal expressions, translating ideas into images. Her most recent work is the Moby Dick Series, where she draws on great literature as well as on her many days and nights at sea. She now lives on a commercial fishing dock in a two-hundred year old former ship chandlery.

In this painting, Ms. Figuerido utilizes some of the tools of the visual language of statistical graphics (laying down a grid to chart a course) and symbols for concepts like weather patterns and navigational signs. These present an amalgam of ways by which humans try to take stock of what is around them. They function more as calligraphy or hieroglyphics, as abstraction. We chose this painting because it reminds us of the difference between reading a musical score and hearing the music.

Concerts at the Point

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2016

THE CLAREMONT TRIO

Emily Bruskin, violin

Julia Bruskin, cello

Andrea Lam, piano

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TRIO IN G MINOR, OP. 15

SMETANA

Moderato assai – Più animato

Allegro, ma non agitato

Finale. Presto

TRIO

SHEPHERD

Florid Hopscotch

Calderwood

Slow Waltz of the Robots

INTERMISSION ...

TRIO IN B FLAT MAJOR, OP. 97 'ARCHDUKE'

BEETHOVEN

Allegro moderato

Scherzo: Allegro – coda

Andante cantabile, ma però con moto – Poco più adagio – Tempo I

Allegro moderato

Presto – Più presto



THE PERFORMERS

THE CLAREMONT TRIO

Lauded as “one of America’s finest young chamber groups” *Strad Magazine*, the Claremont Trio is sought after for its thrillingly virtuosic and richly communicative performances. The Claremonts are consistently praised for their “aesthetic maturity, interpretive depth, and exuberance” *Palm Beach Daily News*.

In addition to digging deeply and perceptively into more well-known works, the Claremonts commission music by contemporary composers. When the Claremonts opened the new concert hall at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston in 2012, they included the Shepherd Trio which they offer on today’s program. During the 2015-16 season they returned to the Gardner to present a four-concert series featuring Brahms’ Piano Trios alongside new works by Judd Greenstein, Robert Paterson, Donald Crockett and Lembit Beecher.

Their discography includes Beethoven’s Triple Concerto with the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra and his Trio Op. 1 No. 1, Mendelssohn Trios, Shostakovich and Arensky Trios, American Trios and a collaborative disc with clarinetist Jonathan Cohler.

The Claremont Trio was formed in 1999 at the Juilliard School. Twin sisters Emily Bruskin (violin) and Julia Bruskin (cello) grew up in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and they both play old French instruments. Emily’s violin is a Lupot from 1795; Julia’s cello is a J.B. Vuillaume from 1849. Andrea Lam (piano) grew up in Sydney, Australia. The Claremonts are all now based in New York City near their namesake: Claremont Avenue.

For more information about the Claremont Trio, please visit www.claremonttrio.com.

PROGRAM NOTES

BEDRICH SMETANA (1824-1884)

TRIO IN G MINOR, OP. 15

Moderato assai – Più animato

Allegro, ma non agitato

Finale. Presto



Bedrich Smetana emerges as the first truly nationalistic Czech composer. A generation older than Dvorák, Smetana participated in revolutionary protests against the Austro-Hungarian Hapsburgs, emigrated to Sweden for a time, and ultimately returned to Prague a prodigal son, celebrated for his numerous operas, orchestral and piano pieces which reflect Czech culture and identity. His personal life was very difficult. Smetana buried his first wife as well as three of his four daughters who died during infancy. In his mid-fifties, Smetana developed tinnitus, eventually became deaf and ultimately succumbed to madness, most likely from syphilis. To the chamber world, he bequeathed two amazing works: a late string quartet and the earlier piano trio, both passionate epics of romantic expression deeply reflecting these personal tragedies.

Smetana wrote his only piano trio in 1855 when he was just thirty-one. He dedicated the work to his oldest daughter Bedřiška who had just died at the age of four from scarlet fever. She was a young girl of great musical abilities with whom he had an especially close relationship. He was devastated. Though he left no specific programmatic description of the Trio, its grief-stricken and elegiac character is unmistakable. Influenced by Eastern-European folk music with its unbridled passion, the work includes rhapsodic forms full of rich thematic variation and a piano style more Liszt than Chopin. A milestone of romanticism, it predates and significantly presages music that would soon come from the likes of Brahms and Dvorák, among others.

The first movement is a towering force of anguish and despair beginning with broad, devastating gestures that continue to tighten



and accelerate until the final bars of near mania. The sonata theme contrasts this trajectory with something completely different: a lyrical, tender second theme rising gracefully between vicious onslaughts. Smetana described this as one of his daughter's favorite melodies. Both the dark and light subjects significantly transform throughout the movement as the emotional tenor of the music rises to panic on one hand, shining triumph on the other. This alternation between dark and light—death and daughter—vividly continues throughout all three movements.

The middle movement is troubled rather than devastated. A worried scherzo unusually provides two different trios, each offsetting the surrounding gloom in its own way. The first offers a sighing, swaying melody of tender expression, the second, a march that is by turns luminous, then regal, then epic in an outpouring of bright light, again, the full heartbreaking majesty of what was, but is no longer.

The finale is a swift, dashing rondo. The opening "gallop" undeniably evokes Schubert's famous "Erlkönig" where a father and his son race on horseback, desperately fleeing death as it reaches for the child. Between episodes of frantic motion, there are soft lyrical interludes, the sigh of a child and the gentle nobility of Smetana's daughter's theme from the first movement. But the end is nigh, the contest fatal. The gallop halts, confronted by the stark, timeless dread of a funeral march. But the music is not yet over. Smetana seems determined to end on a higher plane, the nature of which is difficult to describe: a flourish for purely musical reasons, or maybe a final affirmation of what survives, what death could not ultimately take away.

Source: earsense.com

A portrait of Sean Shepherd, a man with dark, wavy hair and a light beard, wearing a dark jacket over a light blue shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a blurred landscape with mountains and water.

SEAN SHEPHERD (1979-)

TRIO

Florid Hopscotch

Calderwood

Slow Waltz of the Robots

An “exciting composer of the new American generation” *New York Times*, Sean Shepherd has quickly gained admiration and return engagements with major ensembles and performers across the US and Europe. He recently completed his tenure as Composer Fellow of the Cleveland Orchestra.

Trio was commissioned for the Claremont Trio by the Claremont Commission Consortium in honor of Calderwood Hall at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, MA, and premiered there on January 22, 2012.

Shepherd writes, “It’s a piece for an occasion, and one for which I was very happy to contribute: the first concert for a new concert hall and 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 had hidden 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 on 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. I do not like spoilers, but I am inclined to 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.” *Source: Sean Shepherd*



LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1779-1827)

PIANO TRIO IN B FLAT MAJOR, OP. 97 'ARCHDUKE'

Allegro moderato

Scherzo: Allegro – coda

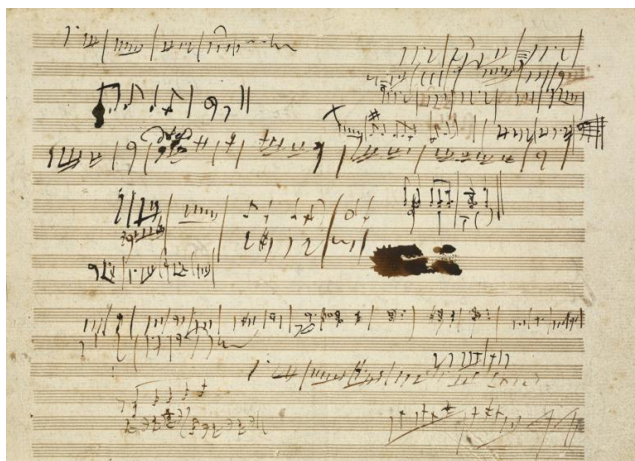
Andante cantabile, ma però con moto – Poco più adagio – Tempo I

Allegro moderato

Presto – Più presto

Despite the considerable contributions of Haydn and Mozart, it remained for Beethoven to give the piano trio an importance it had not enjoyed before. Without crossing the boundaries of true chamber music, he achieved a concertante style of unprecedented brilliance and power that was to set the standards for the flowering of the genre throughout the 19th century, as exemplified most notably in the works of Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms and Dvorák.

The 'Archduke' is the crowning masterpiece of Beethoven's cycle of piano trios and is the last in his series. Beethoven sketched the work during the summer of 1810 and dedicated it to the Archduke Rudolph of Austria, one of Beethoven's truest friends, his pupil, and one of the three men who subscribed to an allowance for the composer. Its public premiere did not take place until 1814, with Beethoven at the piano in his last public appearance at the keyboard.



Ludwig van Beethoven.
Sketches for the
Archduke Trio, op. 97:
scherzo and andante
cantabile. Handwritten
score, 1811.
NYPL, The New York
Public Library for the
Performing Arts, Music
Division.

The first movement opens with the piano's statement of a broad, noble theme. Repeated and amplified with the entrance of the strings, it leads to a second subject in the unexpected key of G major and then returns to be examined and discussed in the course of an impressive development section. Following the recapitulation, there is a brilliant coda.

The second movement is a scherzo. The extended middle section presents two contrasting elements in alternation: a winding, tortured chromatic fugato built on very narrow intervals (anticipating the style of the late sonatas and quartets) and a dashing waltz tune. The coda underlines the humorous element with its abrupt break-off.

The serene slow movement is a series of variations on a hymn-like melody. There are four variations of great melodic and rhythmic interest, and of growing tension and complexity, but after the fourth, the theme is restated in its original purity. It is followed by a dreamy coda which extends as a bridge to the finale. The concluding movement is a freely-handled rondo, alternating light-hearted passages with heroic outbursts. The extended coda is full of surprises, ending in a manner Haydn would have loved, but which is still thoroughly, and unmistakably, Beethoven.

Sources: Programme Notes by Philip R Buttall, www6.plymouth.ac.uk

Concerts at the Point

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March 26

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