

The Red Bank
Chamber Music Society

presents

The Claremont Trio

Emily Bruskin, Violin

Julia Bruskin, Cello

Andrea Lam, Piano

Brahms • Grime • Dvořák

Sunday Afternoon

November 17, 2019 • 4:30 PM

Trinity Church Auditorium

Red Bank, NJ

PROGRAM

Piano Trio No. 3 in C minor, Op. 60 (1886)

Johannes Brahms

- I. Allegro energico
- II. Presto non assai
- III. Andante grazioso
- IV. Allegro molto

Three Whistler Miniatures (2011)

Helen Grime

- I. The Little Note in Yellow and Gold (Tranquillo)
- II. Lapis Lazuli (Presto)
- III. The Violet Note (Lontano, molto flessibile)

INTERMISSION

Piano Trio in E minor, Op. 90 "Dumky" (1891)

Antonín Dvořák

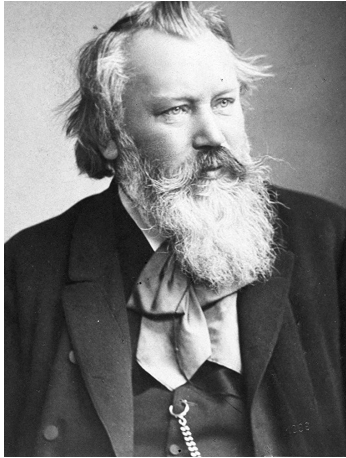
- I. Lento maestoso; Allegro vivace, quasi doppio movimento
- II. Poco adagio; Vivace non troppo
- III. Andante; Vivace non troppo
- IV. Andante moderato (quasi tempo di marcia); Allegretto scherzando
- V. Allegro
- VI. Lento maestoso; Vivace, quasi doppio movimento

Notes on the Program

Johannes Brahms (1833 - 1897)

Piano Trio No. 3 in C minor, Op. 60 (1886)

(~21 minutes)



No other composer than Brahms better represents a melding of Romantic style and Classical form. Furthermore, within his lifetime he experienced both the waning of Romanticism and the birth of the controversial Second Viennese School led by Arnold Schoenberg. Nor was Brahms free from a part in this latter musical evolution as evidenced by some of his late works and by Schoenberg's bow to him in his essay "Brahms the Progressive." The famous late 19th century controversy that pitted Brahms against Wagner and divided the musical world would seem of less significance if it had not inspired the French to take a new path with Impressionism. Within all these developments, however, Brahms maintained his individual stamp of elegant form, adventurous harmony, gorgeous melody, and grand sweep of emotion.

Of Brahms' three works for piano, violin, and cello, the C Minor Trio is the last and the most concise. It was written during the productive summer and early fall of 1886 which also produced the F Major Cello Sonata and the A Major Violin Sonata. While Brahms avoided extra-musical references in his work, still the C Minor Trio suggests the geography in which it was created, that is, the ice-capped mountains of the Bernese Oberland in Switzerland. Brahms often vacationed and worked there in the town of Thun near Interlaken. Thus it is that the C Minor Trio represents some of Brahms' most rugged and powerful music. Clara Schumann said of it: "What a work it is, inspired throughout in its passion, its power of thought, its gracefulness, its poetry. No previous work of Johannes has so completely carried me away."

Indeed, the C Minor Trio is remarkable in its drama and its lyricism. The short and powerful first movement represents some of Brahms' strongest music. Its opening statement becomes the controlling factor of not only this movement but the entire work, an example of what Arnold Schoenberg would later call the "developing variation" in Brahms. The motto continues in disguise in the second movement with its mysterious, ghostly qualities that end in a whisper. It is hinted at again in the Andante, this time with greater intervals between its notes and sometimes inverted. Here, too, we have Brahms' love of irregular meters. This charming movement, in which the instruments converse rather than simply play together, is followed by the powerful final movement Allegro molto where we hear the peculiar Brahmsian effect of increased tempo through rhythmic changes rather than actual tempo markings. The darkest shade of C minor persists in the movement until the triumphant coda in C major.

Like so many of his mature works, the C Minor Trio reveals the split face of Brahms the Classicist with his strict honoring of sonata form and Brahms the Romantic with his sweeping lyricism.

The work was premiered on December 20, 1886 by Brahms joined by violinist Joseph Joachim and cellist David Popper.

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Helen Grime (1981-) **Three Whistler Miniatures (2011)**

(~12 minutes)



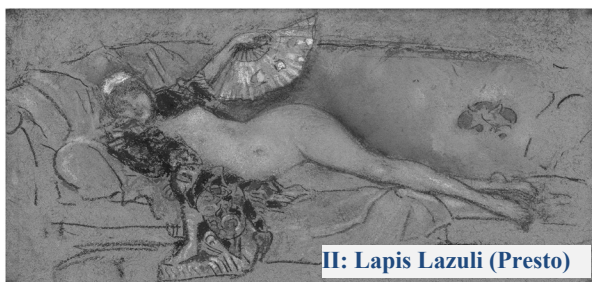
The titles refer to three chalk and pastel miniatures, which are displayed in the Veronese Room of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston. Although the music does not relate directly to the pictures, I was taken by the subtly graduated palate and intimate atmosphere suggested by each of them.

Throughout the piece the violin and cello form a sort of unit, which is set against the contrasting nature of the piano.

The first movement opens with a very quiet and gentle piano melody. Gradually the violin and cello become part of the texture, but moving at a slower pace. The violin and cello form an overlapping two-part melody, very high in register and ethereal in quality whilst the piano moves at a quicker pace with a more detailed and elaborate version of the string material creating a delicate, layered effect. This leads to a faster section, the two string instruments have overlapping material with more agitated outbursts from the piano. This builds to an impassioned and somewhat flamboyant piano solo, featuring falling gestures and is interspersed with an intensified and quicker version of the previous string material until the end of the movement.



The second movement is lively and virtuosic for all three players. A running continuous line is passed back and forth between the cello and violin, eventually being taken by the piano before a more melodic section. Lyrical lines are



contrasted with the more jagged material of the opening, the three instruments coming together in rhythmic unison before an extended and complete melody is heard in the violin and cello. Each melodic entry is lower in register and dynamic, seeming to die away before the final presto section takes over until the movements close.



III: The Violet Note
(Lontano, molto flessibile)

Beginning with a distant high piano melody and set against muted strings ‘quasi lullaby’, the third movement alludes to the textures and material of the opening of the piece. A more agitated florid section leads to a heightened rendition of the piano melody for high cello surrounded by filigree passagework in the piano and violin. The violin takes over before the final section, which combines the piano writing from the opening of the first movement, but here it is much darker in nature.

Note: Whistler images are from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston (www.gardnermuseum.org). The Program Notes are copyrighted by Helen Grime.



Antonín Dvořák (1841 - 1904)

Piano Trio in E minor, Op. 90 “Dumky” (1891)

(~30 minutes)



Son of a poor but musical butcher and innkeeper, Dvořák escaped that destiny and went instead to Prague where he began composing immediately after completing his studies at the Organ School. He was a violist in the orchestra of the National Theatre in Prague and little known as a composer until he was befriended by Brahms who recognized his rare genius and championed him throughout his life. Dvořák traveled to England in 1844 where he was immediately acclaimed and then to America in 1892 where he won fresh approval. He returned to his native Bohemia in 1895 where he became professor of composition and later director at the Prague Conservatorium until his death in 1904. He was given a national funeral and buried with other national heroes in Vyšehrad cemetery.

Chamber music permeated Dvořák’s compositional life from his Op. 1 String Quintet of 1861 to his Op. 106 String Quartet of 1896. While his love of folk music is ever present in his some forty chamber works, he was not confined in them by his nationalistic interests. More important than any national identification are the freshness, spontaneity, and sense of exploration which pervade his chamber music.

No greater compliment has been paid Dvořák than by Brahms himself when he said, “I should be glad if something occurred to me as a main idea that occurs to Dvořák only by the way.” Brahms does not stand alone in his admiration of Dvořák. Janáček said of him: You know that feeling when somebody takes the word out of your mouth before you have time to form it? That was always my experience in Dvořák’s company. In him, his person and his work were interchangeable. And then his melodies were as if he had taken them from my heart. Such a bond nothing on earth can sever.

Threading its way through all of these compliments is admiration for Dvořák’s freshness of musical ideas, particularly in terms of his beautiful melodies, colorful harmony, rich sonorities, and rhythmic inventiveness. Interspersed are an awareness and a respect for the strong national identity and richness he brings, in different ways, to both his symphonic and chamber music outpourings. Despite its national flavor, a word should be said about Dvořák’s transcendence of nationalism in his music. For all his championing of the Czech folk spirit, Dvořák was not slave to it.

To think of the “Dumky” Trio as eccentric is tempting if not accurate. That we are pulled back and forth between dark and light in a way that may seem odd is explained, however, more by the term *dumky* (plural for *dumka*) than by any eccentricity on the part of Dvořák. The *dumka* is a type of Slavonic folk song or lament with sudden changes from melancholy to exuberance. In the case of the Dvořák E Minor Trio, the *dumka* is brought to high art. Dvořák abandons traditional cyclic sonata form in this trio with its six independent *dumky*. Yet the work has an organic form all its own. Its governing factors are contrast, lyricism, and use of peasant dance forms.

All six movements contain different songs of great lyrical beauty. Each instrument is given its lyrical moments, but the darker voice of the cello seems favored except in the third movement when much is offered by the piano. Here the lyricism is almost Schubertian in its otherworldliness. Often the melodies are used as a kind of motto for the movements such as the six-note theme of the fourth movement or *dumka*.

The folk dance also figures in each movement. Sometimes the dance is earthy and peasant-like, and other times, such as in the fifth movement, it is treated with elaborate sophistication. We are reminded that Dvořák, despite his declaration of simplicity, is a highly complex composer with a genius for fresh ideas.

The *dumka* itself was an ingenious vehicle for Dvořák’s own complex and fiery temperament. At the same time he used it to display his mastery of instrumental technique with special consideration for the rich tones of the cello.

The “Dumky” Trio, premiered in Prague on April 11, 1891 with the composer himself at the piano, came at the peak of Dvořák’s creative powers. He performed the work in forty concerts throughout Bohemia and Moravia to great acclaim. The following year, on September 16, 1892, Dvořák arrived in America to assume a position at the National Conservatory in New York City and to begin the process that would produce such works as his “American” Quartet and his famous Symphony No. 9, “From the New World.”

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Interested in volunteering?

Our concerts are made possible by the generous contributions of our members, but also through the work of RBCMS volunteers and our Board of Trustees. Recently, we've had some losses from the Board, so are seeking new volunteers and Board members. We especially could use additional help in concert set up and logistics (arranging for piano rental, providing snacks for the musicians, helping keeping track of attendance and guests, clean up after the concert etc.).

Additional members on the Board would also be helpful, especially someone who would be interested in helping in our outreach to new audiences and to other arts organizations, as well as providing back-up for the other Board members. We typically meet a couple of weeks before each concert, as well as a couple of other times per year, based on members' schedules. You do not have to be a musician to be on the Board – only passionate about continuing to be able to offer world-class chamber music performances to the Red Bank community and willing to work collegially with other like-minded volunteers.

If you are interested, please contact one of the Board members or send us an email at info@rbcms.org.

Thanks.

Note

As a favor to your fellow concertgoers, please remember to turn off your cell phones. If you feel you might have a cough coming on, please try to unwrap any lozenges before the concert begins or between movements.

Artists

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. First winners of the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson International Trio Award and the only piano trio ever to win the Young Concert Artists International Auditions, the Claremonts are consistently lauded for their "aesthetic maturity, interpretive depth, and exuberance" (*Palm Beach Daily News*).

In 2017 the Claremont Trio recorded and performed Eric Sawyer's triple concerto and John Harbison's double concerto with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project. The trio also gave the world premiere of Kati Agócs' "Queen of Hearts" as part of a week-long residency at the prestigious Chamber Music Northwest festival in Portland, OR. Highlights of the Trio's 2017-18 season include performances for Newtown Friends of Music in Connecticut; ArtsLIVE at the University of Dayton, OH; Chamber Music Live at Queens College in New York; Chamber Music Monterey Bay and Mill Valley Chamber Music in California; Classical Interludes at the Brooklyn Public Library in New York.

The Claremont Trio’s recent seasons have included engagements at Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, the Library of Congress, Boston’s Celebrity Series, Chicago’s Dame Myra Hess Series, Pasadena’s Coleman Chamber Music Association, Johns Hopkins University, the Austin Chamber Music Festival, Stanford Lively Arts, Kansas City Friends of Chamber Music, along with the Chamber Music Societies of Phoenix, Dallas, Sedona, San Antonio, Buffalo, and the Universities of Washington, Wisconsin, and Missouri. The Trio has performed the Beethoven Triple Concerto with orchestras such as the Nashville Symphony, Virginia Symphony, Pacific Symphony, and Utah Symphony. The group also appears regularly at festivals including Ravinia, Saratoga, Mostly Mozart, Caramoor, Skaneateles, Rockport, Bard, and Norfolk.

American Modern Recordings released the Claremont Trio’s newest recording of Robert Paterson’s works, including Claremont Trio commission “Moon Trio”, in December of 2016. *Gramophone* magazine praised the Trio’s “poetry and... thrilling virtuosity” in their Beethoven “Triple” Concerto with the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra, recently released on Bridge Records. Of their Beethoven & Ravel CD, one reviewer raved “These are some of the most impassioned, moving, and notable readings of these favorites that I have ever heard, bar none.” (*Audiophile Audition*). Their discography also includes Mendelssohn Trios, Shostakovich and Arensky Trios, and American Trios with works by Leon Kirchner, Ellen Zwilich, Paul Schoenfield, and Mason Bates. A collaborative disc with clarinetist Jonathan Cohler garnered a glowing review in *Fanfare* magazine and received a Critic’s CHOICE award from *BBC Magazine*.

The Claremont Trio has commissioned new trios by Nico Muhly, Kati Agócs, Gabriela Lena Frank, Mason Bates, Sean Shepherd, Judd Greenstein, Helen Grime, Donald Crockett, Robert Paterson, Paul Chihara, Sharon Farber, Howard Frazin, Daniel Kellogg, and Hillary Zipper. They have conducted master classes at the Columbia University, Eastman School of Music, Duke University, Peabody Conservatory’s Preparatory Division, and the Boston Conservatory.

The Claremont Trio was formed in 1999 at the Juilliard School. Twin sisters Emily Bruskin and Julia Bruskin 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 grew up in Sydney, Australia. The Claremonts are all now based in New York City near their namesake: Claremont Avenue.

Emily Bruskin has performed as soloist with the Virginia, Pacific, San Francisco Ballet, Utah, and Nashville Symphonies and has given recitals across the country and around the world in venues such as Carnegie Hall, the American Academy in Rome, the Kennedy Center, and Boston's Jordan Hall. As violinist of the Claremont Trio she has made critically acclaimed recordings on the Arabesque, Bridge, Tria, and Ongaku labels and has commissioned trios from Nico Muhly, Mason Bates, Gabriela Lena Frank, Sean Shepherd, Helen Grime and Hillary Zipper. Ms. Bruskin has appeared at the Saratoga, Mostly Mozart, Caramoor, and Ravinia festivals and has given masterclasses at Columbia University, the Eastman School of Music, and Duke University. Ms. Bruskin was a grand prize winner of the Young Concert Artists International Auditions and the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson International Trio Award and received BBC Magazine's Critic's Choice Award and the Classical Recording Foundation's Young Artist Award. A graduate of the Columbia-Juilliard program, she holds degrees in Neuroscience and in Music.

Since her concerto debut with the Boston Symphony Orchestra at age 17, cellist **Julia Bruskin** has established herself as one of the premiere cellists of her generation. She performed Samuel Barber's Cello Concerto with conductor Jahja Ling at Avery Fisher Hall and has also been soloist with the Nashville Symphony, Utah Symphony, Virginia Symphony, and Pacific Symphony among others. Her recent CD of music by Beethoven, Brahms, and Dohnanyi was praised by Fanfare Magazine for its "exquisite beauty of sound and expression".

A founding member of the critically acclaimed Claremont Trio, Ms. Bruskin won 1st prize in the 2001 Young Concert Artists International Auditions and was awarded the first ever Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson International Trio Award. The trio tours extensively, including recent concerts at the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Museum and Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. Bridge Records released the Claremont Trio's recording of the Beethoven "Triple" Concerto with the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra and Beethoven's Trio Op. 1 No. 1 to rave reviews.

Ms. Bruskin plays frequent solo recitals with her husband, Aaron Wunsch, and together they are joint artistic directors of the Skaneateles Festival in the Finger Lakes region of New York. A frequent guest at summer music festivals, Ms. Bruskin has performed at Chamber Music Northwest, La Jolla Summerfest, Mostly Mozart, Caramoor, Saratoga, Bard, and Norfolk, and toured with the Musicians from Ravinia. Ms. Bruskin has taught at the Juilliard Pre-College and Queens College, and given master classes at the Eastman School of Music, the Peabody Conservatory, the Boston Conservatory, and Duke University.

Born in Boston, Massachusetts, Ms Bruskin's teachers have included Timothy Eddy, Joel Krosnick, Andres Diaz, Norman Fischer, and Nancy Hair. She completed the five-year double degree program at Juilliard and Columbia University. In addition to performing with the Claremont Trio and playing recitals with her husband, Aaron Wunsch, Ms. Bruskin plays with the

Metropolitan Opera Orchestra.

Lauded for her “melting lyricism, filigree touch and spirited eloquence” (The Australian) and pronounced a “real talent” (Wall Street Journal), Australian pianist **Andrea Lam** is gaining recognition for her "great style and thrilling virtuosity" (Sydney Morning Herald). In recent years, she has given over seventy performances with orchestras in Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Japan, and Hong Kong. She has worked with renowned conductors including Alan Gilbert, Edo de Waart, Michael Christie, and Marcus Stenz. Andrea Lam was a Semifinalist in the 2009 Van Cliburn Competition. In 2009, she was also the Silver Medalist at the San Antonio Piano Competition, where she won additional prizes for the Best Classical performance and Best Russian performance. In 2010, she joined the Astral Artists Roster as a winner of their national auditions. Ms. Lam holds degrees from the Yale School of Music, where she studied with Boris Berman, and the Manhattan School of Music, where she studied with Arkady Aronov.

