

Entertainment

Concert review: Mother's Day concert in Newburgh

Music lovers delighted by annual Mother's Day chamber music concert

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NEWBURGH — For its fourth annual Mother's Day concert, Newburgh Chamber Music presented Innisfree, a trio that has played together now for 12 years. Violinist Carole Cowan, cellist Susan Seligman and pianist Sylvia Buccelli performed Sunday afternoon at St. George's Church before a delighted music-loving audience. It was a concert worthy of Carnegie Hall for the quality of the playing and the variety of the program. The trio fashioned a musical conversation of timely, warm and intelligent exchanges involving classical and modern compositions that are not often heard. For one piece, they were joined by guest artist John Greenly, whose clarinet added another pleasurable note to the afternoon.

Gabriel Faure's Piano Trio in D minor is a late work that marks his shift from impressionism to more expressionistic and experimental compositions. In three movements, the piece opens with a cascade of keyboard scales that are then echoed by the cello and finally the violin. Throughout, the piano provides the expected bass continuo, but it soon proves to be the leading partner in the melodic development that follows into the mid-point andante, with its slow and steady tempo and tonality until its final fading out. The climactic allegro returns to earlier motifs and colors them with fresh verve and lively legatos, with the piano running the gamut from low to high octaves and the strings repeating the refrain.

Peter Schickele's Quartet for Clarinet, Violin, Cello and Piano offers four contrasting sections that are marked "Moderate, flowing"; "Fast, driving"; "Slow, elegiac, but with motion" and "Quite fast, dancing." The first part is surprisingly mellow and appealing, but it is the second that is most engaging, full of the humorous turns that have made this PDQ Bach composer famous. With Bernstein-like leaps, jazz and blues mingle with tinkling piano keys, searing strings and cool clarinet that smooth out into quiet cadences in the slow movement. The finale fuses popular and folk dance rhythms full of energetic figurations and stylistic variations.

After intermission, the group featured Beethoven's Piano Trio in D Major, known as the "Ghost" because its middle adagio movement was originally planned for the witches' scene in an opera (never written) of "Macbeth." From its opening charging fanfare and abrupt shifts of tempo as strings ride over pianistic arpeggios, the work embodies the boldness of Beethoven's mid-period, marked also by the melancholy grandeur of the largo with its tragic chords and funereal march. The final presto ties the five-note earlier theme to new textures and re-phrasings, until a brief piano cadenza and string pizzicato bring this challenging work to its close.

The trio met the challenge with remarkable skill, sensitivity and rapport.