Howdy, here is my review of your concert tonight. It's really long. Pretty frickin' easy with playing like that! Thank you again...

THREE
the music room chamber players
sept 30 2015
by margot aldrich

Three entered and as if to say, "*this* is what we do", opened the performance without hesitation. They know how to get to the point and with Couperin's "Muséte Taverni", set the tone for the evening with this trumpet, flute and bassoon trio. We understood we were in for a Carnival, some marathon playing, great communication and above all, some joyous foot stomping whether literal or actual. We were swept away from the first note.

Reconfiguring with Few now on piano for Friedrich Kuhlau's "Trio Concertant Opus 119", the three were able to transform the hall to the salon where we were simply listening to friends play some classic Beethoven-like form; in this case devoid of the eye glazing inducement we normally experience. The tempo sustained an infused joy and clear narrative, balancing technical precision and musical abandon. The Adagio Patetico received Three's stamp of character with clear interpretation of the composer's indecision between melancholy and imposed elation. Flute and bassoon established clear masculine and feminine voices with the piano touch perfectly appropriate for the voicing. Few gave us the art of accompaniment and knew exactly when to come out with full expression. Mackie Jackson and Newman achieved some beautiful on-the-spot intonation adjustments almost imperceptibly. The Rondo took us back to the Carnival, completely avoiding the potential of this movement to become pedestrian but rather pushing the tempo with a gay abandon. It is a feat to stay connected to the room while sustaining the focus needed in the face of pages resembling an entomological event with its clusters of very, very fast notes. Three zoned in and nailed it.

Next came a true phenomenon as Mackie Jackson performed three Piano Sonatas by Scarlatti adapted by Michael Sweeney for solo bassoon. For those who are bassoonists or merely sympathizers, you will know that this is a stretch by any standard. Although never meant to be performed publicly, they were performed as a mission statement for The Bassoon Cause. The Allegretto was a technical feat, akin to watching a particularly suspenseful moment of a Cirque du Soleil act... and *not* just because of her blue hair. One found oneself back in the practice room with its associated blood sweat and tears. Andante lamented, giving us memories of still lakes and loons and forest calls creating their own rhythm without metre. Mackie Jackson finished with the Prestissimo with filigree as richly detailed as the leather construction of her remarkable concert outfit; a perfect pairing. Offering absolute virtuosity, Mackie Jackson imparted the depth, reach and importance of her beloved instrument.

Mathieu Lussier, a bassoonist himself, composed the "Bacchanale" which Three gave us, in this instance, in the form of piano, flute and bassoon. This profound piece of writing opened with an undeniable sentiment of Bad Ass. It was so very *there.* Each member of Three established their muscle. The writing needed little interpretation, establishing itself clearly with a sense of Québecois culture mixed with a strong Latin leaning. Echoes of Gilles Vigneault, Jacques Brel, Felix Leclerc with a strong Piazzola form just let the players get on and ride, putting their heads up to breathe occasionally amid the density and complexity of the event. It would be fair to say this brilliant piece of writing would stand up to any Canadian chamber composition.

Loeillet's "Trio sonata in C Minor" brought us home as Three fell into the ease of baroque, where the world makes sense. The Largo felt like where it all began; mathematical foundations. The Allegro with its talking heads; conflict within perfect symmetry, going from chatter to perfectly

agreed upon unison 16th passages. The Adagio abandoned all intensity, like a good Shavasana, letting the placidness of the writing simply be. Three great musicians can give you this. Finally, their Allegro was wisely handled, limiting expression within the complexity of the writing, thus avoiding potential motion sickness. Less being more.

The evening's program could have been digestively overwhelming. It was a large plate with a challenging number of flavours. But as we moved between pieces, our palate was cleared with genuine, thoughtful and often hilarious discourse. We never felt full – there was always room for another course.

Enter Newman on flute and electronics playing "NoaNoa" by Kaija Saariaho. A piece that will hold a place in your emotional memory for a very long time, its texture of sound was like the frayed edges of a Japanese calligraphy stroke and it held the space like the echo between two mountains. Percussion of spoken guttural sounds was woven into musical articulation combining both the flute's and the voice's ranges and textures. The use of Newman's voice provided aeolian borders to the music which then led to one pure note piercing an auditory hall of mirrors then diminished to the sound of ghost voices straining to be understood. This remarkable piece and Newman's sensitive performance of it left us with a sense of our own history of human encounters, flashes of distant memory and those names we almost remembered but are forever lost to us.

Few handled our now fragile state with care and acceptance as he gave us Harry Simeone's "Trumpet in the Night" solo. The room became a back alley on a humid night as he combined technical precision with a kind of leaning into the back legs of a chair; a jazz meandering that mesmerized us with an element of Pied Piper as we were led willingly. Few himself seemed under the same spell, as his musical sensitivity felt almost like channeling.

All change as we are offered some Shostakovich. Forget the militarism and the angst, this is a *Waltz* from a *Jazz Suite.* A breakaway moment, almost akin to a Stravinsky ballet. Voices so well paired and a kind of holding back, head slightly cocked with those eyes just a little too close together. Three does that very well...

Ah Piazzola. First "Oblivion". It turns out Tango lends itself well to bassoon as Mackie Jackson effectively played the roles of string bass, violinist and voice. Three captured the understated, slow, fluid motions of the dance, complete with seductive glances. Bandoneon was very present in the spirit of Three's performance. Their "Otno Porteno" leaned into bends and laments. The air was thick and dark with visions of beads and heels. Three provided a new emotion not experienced before except perhaps by natives of Buenos Aires.

Three does not simply perform. They invite you into a segment of their packed and varied lives. They give you every musical climate and contour, every human expression and interaction. They give you a culinary experience and a Sommelier's guidance. You have a sense that they travel not only across the country but through musical experiences and experiments in their lives, bringing together past, present and future. Music is not something they do, it is who they are, inside and out and they give their skill and their stories generously. If you are lucky you will be invited too.

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