

TRIOMPHE 3

Hypnotique

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Elena Kats-Chernin (UZB; b. 1957)

Calliope Dreaming

Duration 7' 30"

Born in 1957 in Tashkent (Uzbekistan), Elena Kats-Chernin attended the Gnessin Musical College before immigrating to Australia in 1975. She graduated from the New South Wales Conservatorium of Music in 1980 and was awarded a DAAD (German academic exchange) grant to study with Helmut Lachenmann in Hanover. After 13 years in Germany, she returned to Australia where she now lives in Sydney.

Elena Kats-Chernin's extensive oeuvre includes works from nearly all genres of classical composition: instrumental solo and ensemble pieces, symphonic, chamber orchestral and concertos, for plays, ballet and musical theater, choral and other vocal music. Among her many commissions are pieces for Ensemble Modern, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Australian World Orchestra, the Adelaide, Tasmanian, Melbourne and Sydney Symphony Orchestras, the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, City of London Sinfonia, Swedish Chamber Orchestra and the North Carolina Symphony.

About this work Elena writes:

"Composing this piece was part of the D2H festival in which 18 composers around the world were commissioned to write a piece as a tribute to Joseph Haydn. Early in the process of conceiving this piece, while researching about Haydn and his music, I came across a sentence in some of his biographies that he wished for the slow movement of his Mourning Symphony nr 44 ("TRAUERSINFONIE") to be played at his funeral.

Somehow that ignited my imagination. I thought that this notion perhaps would create a connection to the occasion for which I was writing this trio, the anniversary of Haydn's death.

While studying the work, I realized that there were so many beautiful inspiring motifs in it that I decided to compose a fantasy on the many different themes of the symphony, without keeping to the order in which they originally appeared. While I worked quite freely with these motifs, I did give the slow movement more exposure than to other themes. Naturally, during the process of the composing, my own motifs crept in and the whole mood of the piece started to take a shape which was more in line with the Finale of the symphony, which is based on the edgy rhythmic material that I really liked very much.

My piece for the trio is overall quite energetic, however with some calmer moments. Because of the upbeat character of most of the piece, the following association occurred to me: that of a piece played by a Calliope, a keyboard instrument made up of steam whistles. In Greek Mythology Calliope is also a name for a muse of epic poetry, which I thought was somehow a bonus, even though the piece is not epic, but maybe has some poetic moments."

Gabriel Fauré (FRA; 1845 – 1924)

Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 120

I. Allegro, ma non troppo

II. Andantino

III. Allegro vivo

Duration 20'

Faure was possibly even deafer than Beethoven when he wrote this, his only piano trio, and penultimate work. It was 1922, and he was feeling his age, writing to his wife: *'I'm doing absolutely nothing and haven't thought of two notes worth writing down since I've been here. Have I come to the end of my resources?'*

The piano quintet had been a storming success the previous spring but he was worried that that was all he had in him, and was also missing the stimulation of work – Director of the Paris Conservatoire for 17 years, he'd recently been persuaded to retire on account of his deafness, and was spending the winter in Argèles, near the Pyrenées, in the hope of igniting some creative spark. He'd come from there: his mother was Occitan (they pronounced their name Fa-ouré) and they were places where he had always felt inspired. In the event, though, inspiration didn't come until April. His publisher had the bright idea for a piano trio and Fauré was already working on it when he embarked on a tour through the Haute-Savoie, his favourite region in all France, with its lakes and vine-clad hills and ancient, romantic castles. It worked. Despite a bout of pneumonia and working through 'a perpetual fatigue', he returned to Paris in the autumn with sketches and the trio premiered on his birthday, May 12, the following year. It was an immediate success, breathing Faure's divine gift for melody and harmony from beginning to end.

The piano lays a watery accompaniment, rippling gently underneath a long, swaying melody from the cello and then the violin: and it's the piano that introduces the second main theme which, like the first, flows and changes constantly before ending in a mood of passionate defiance. The andantino, the movement he began with and the longest of the three, is a tender and exquisitely lyrical duet between violin and cello in octave unison with piano accompaniment. Finally, after an introduction which continues the unison theme – the strings continually appear to be trying to throttle the momentum of this movement – the piano kicks things off with a flourish and races off into a vigorous rustic dance that totally belies the fatigue Fauré said he felt writing it. It's a glorious burst of energy from 'the old magician', as he was known at the Conservatoire, and an immortally young man.

Programme notes by Charlotte Wilson

Pascal Le Boeuf (USA; b.1986)

Obliquely Wrecked (2020)

Duration 8' 30"

Pascal Le Boeuf has been racking up awards like confetti. A 2023 Guggenheim Fellowship, a 2024 Barlow Commission, a 2025 Grammy, he's a jazz pianist, electronic artist and composer who tours with Le Boeuf Brothers among many, has many awards for his music vids, and lives right at the cutting edge of technology in new music today. Vanderbilt selected him right out of Princeton to lead their music technology program. Then MIT, the leading tech university in the U.S., snapped him up for their composition faculty. Now, he's attracting notice all over for a style that is grounded just as much in Debussy and Bach as Bill Evans - one of his recent projects is Counter-Paint, the Art of Fugue - and the New York Times is describing him as sleek, hyper-fluent and a composer that rocks.

Obliquely Wrecked is a tribute to British drum'n'bass pioneer Luke Vibert that emerged after a friendly conversation with Bang-on-a-Can's David Lang. "We were discussing how difficult it can be to maintain high-energy material in a composition for more than a few minutes, and so I decided to explore this limit by composing a continuous high-energy work lasting as long as possible, drawing on the fast tempos, syncopated rhythms, and unique restrictions of step sequencers that form the basis of that particular Vibert style of electronica."

Programme notes by Charlotte Wilson

Lyell Cresswell (NZ; 1944-2022)

Moto Perpetuo (NZTrio 2006 commission)

Duration 6'

"There's a sun dial in the gardens near our house in Edinburgh and it says on one side, 'I number none but sunny hours'. And on the other side it says 'So passes life. Alas, how swift!'"

Lyell was acutely aware of time. The older you get the faster it goes, he said in 2014, on the eve of New Zealand celebrations for his 70th birthday. The concept of time and clocks enter many of his titles. And he always loved writing fast music - observed once that it was getting faster and faster as time went on - loved playing with meter and tempo. And not only that. *"Ideas happen more quickly now. I used to have pieces growing out of a long span of gradual development. Development now tends to happen more quickly, so it's not just the speeding up of the pace, it's the speeding up of the working out of ideas as well."*

So of course he had to write a moto perpetuo, a virtuosic burst of energy. Perpetual motion - motion that, once started, will go on for ever unless stopped by other forces or worn out. The music ebbs and flows around a lively speed of MM120 (i.e. 2 beats per second). It fluctuates only slightly, between MM138 (2.3 beats per second) and MM104 (1.7 beats per second).

Moto Perpetuo was commissioned by NZTrio, with funding by Creative New Zealand.

Programme notes by Charlotte Wilson

Arnold Schönberg (AUT; 1874 - 1951)

Verklärte Nacht (Transfigured Night), Op. 4 (1899, arr. for piano trio by Eduard Steuermann 1932)

Duration 31'

"...It sounds as if someone smeared the score of Wagner's Tristan while it was still wet," wrote one critic and, in conservative Vienna, a music society refused to perform it because it contained a dissonance not yet recognised in the textbooks.

Verklärte Nacht (Transfigured Night) was inspired by a poem in Richard Dehmel's novel, *Zwei Menschen*, and the composer's strong feelings when he first met his future wife, Mathilde von Zemlinsky. Originally composed for string sextet, its erotic nature and the chromatic density of the instrumental writing were unsettling to its first audiences. Schoenberg wrote that, *"The thematic construction is based on the Wagnerian 'model and sequence' technique above a moving harmony, and on Brahms's technique of*

developing variation...” Although much of it is tonal, he later recalled that “*there were already some passages of unfixed tonality which may be considered premonitions of the future.*” For him the piece was a point of departure; he would become one of the most important pioneers of 20th-century music, moving first into atonality and then serialism.

Dehmel’s poem is in five sections and describes a man and a woman walking through “*a bare, cold wood*”. The woman confesses to her lover her dark secret that she is already pregnant to another man. He considers this and says that through their love the child will be born his own. The various stages of the lovers’ emotions are portrayed in music of great passion making it one of the earliest examples of programme music for a chamber group. In 1950 Schoenberg wrote that the long coda “*consists of themes of the preceding parts, all of them modified anew, so as to glorify the miracles of nature that have changed this night of tragedy into a transfigured night*”. The première of *Verklärte Nacht* by the augmented Rosé Quartet on 18 March 1902 in the Vienna Musikverein was controversial, but it quickly became Schoenberg’s most successful work. He arranged it for string orchestra in 1917 (revised 1944), and authorised his former pupil Eduard Steuermann to arrange it for piano trio. In this form it is notable for its transparency and unique sound while retaining the expressive eloquence and edgy colours of the original.

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