

Preview**Rocky River Chamber Music Society:
Season finale features Trio Nord on May 6**

by Mike Telin



On Monday May 6 beginning at 7:30 pm in West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church, The Rocky River Chamber Music Society presents their final concert of the season with a performance by Trio Nord. Sonja Molloy, violin, Lembi Veskimets, viola and Martha Baldwin, cello. The

evening features Mozart's *Prelude and Fugue VI*, K. 404a & *Divertimento in E-flat*, K. 563 & Penderecki's *String Trio* (1990-91).

While many concertgoers are probably familiar with the robust repertoire composed for the string quartet, many may not be as familiar with the great repertoire written for the string trio, but these three Cleveland Orchestra colleagues hope to change that.

"Of course in the world of chamber music the string quartet gets the bulk of the repertoire but, there is a lot of great music written for string trio," says violist Lembi Veskimets. Cellist Martha Baldwin agrees. "None of works on this program are pieces where you miss the fourth voice. There are string trios where you are aware that there are only three instruments, and you feel that they are texturally thin, but these pieces do not feel that way at all. They are complex and I think they elevate the string trio to being an equal to the string quartet."

In fact, Veskimets considers the program's concluding work, Mozart's *Divertimento in E-flat* as the pinnacle of the repertoire. "Even though it was one of the first pieces ever written for the string trio it was written at the very end of Mozart's life, and well after the quartets of Haydn. It's just a spectacular piece of chamber music, a late work by a master composer."

Again, Baldwin agrees. "It's a huge piece that is so symphonic in its structure and complexity, and musically, it has everything you could ever want in a piece of chamber music." Although Baldwin does say that, technically speaking, it is not easy; "I think it is the hardest piece of chamber music I have ever played. It is consistently difficult from beginning to end. As a cellist I look at Mozart and I think, great! this will be a lot of fun, but this piece is really challenging."

Both musicians are looking forward to having the chance to perform the Penderecki. "The orchestra was doing a runout in Oberlin and Lembi handed Sonja and I a stack of CD's and told us to have a listen" Baldwin recalls. "Sonja and I had driven together and on the way home we started listening and right from the start of the piece it grabbed both of us. The opening chords instantly draw you in. It's a very accessible piece and interesting on so many levels. For me it represents the best of twentieth century music." And Veskimets adds, "It is a spectacular piece that we enjoy playing. Its been recorded by a number of trios and it's considered to be a major addition to the repertoire."

The group chose to begin the concert with one of Mozart's *Six Preludes and Fugues* to provide musical contrast, and they thought the piece would be a nice bookend to the concluding Mozart. "We enjoy the piece and of course these are transcriptions of Bach," Veskimets says. "It's fun to begin with a piece that is basically baroque but still chromatic and somewhat strange in places and then jump ahead to the twentieth century with the Penderecki. And you do have to ask yourself, is it all that different or simply a new context? I think the two work together very nicely."

In many ways, Sonja Molloy, Lembi Veskimets, and Martha Baldwin were destined to form a trio. All three studied at the Cleveland Institute of Music with members of the Cleveland Orchestra, and now have the good fortune to all be members of that esteemed ensemble. And all three are from the North: Veskimets and Baldwin are both Canadian, (Toronto and Calgary) and Molloy is from Minnesota. So if you've been wondering if there was a story behind the group's name, both Veskimets and Baldwin confirm that it started as a joke. "The three of us were playing a lot of chamber music," Baldwin says, "but we hadn't given ourselves a name. Some of our friends in the orchestra started to casually refer to us as "the northern girls", so we started saying yes, we're Trio Nord. But it turned out that we loved it and so it has stuck."

Veskimets, who also enjoys her time teaching as part of the Orchestra's Learning Through Music Project, says that playing in the trio also adds to the variety of enjoyable musical activities. "All this gives you a variety of experiences and a chance to express yourself as an individual." She also points out that with a trio all of the voices are soloists. "Because you're missing that one extra voice that takes care of an accompanying or supportive lines, we all have to fill those parts, so you are musically extra busy all the time in a trio."

Baldwin concurs. "Because there are only three voices, everyone has to do so much." But does she ever miss having that fourth player? She honestly says, "On those days when I am feeling less than secure with my playing, those are that days that I miss the fourth player because I start to think that maybe I'd have a few less notes if there was a fourth person."

Both Veskimets and Baldwin say that three are very good friends and really enjoy playing together. "In a lot of ways we're all at the same point in our lives. We've all just had kids within the past two years and so we are going through the same things at the same time and that makes our rehearsals really fun," says Baldwin. "Sometimes the hardest part about rehearsing is to stop talking and start working. But I think that's why I went into music, because of experiences like that."

Published on clevelandclassical.com April 30, 2013