

CD Review: *Time For Three*

by Mike Telin



In this day and age it's not unusual for classically-trained musicians to experiment with and perform music of seemingly unrelated genres. And it's always interesting to hear how they go about incorporating their classical sensibilities into the works of bands like the Beatles or into bluegrass tunes like "Orange Blossom Special". With their 2009 release, *Three Fervent Travelers*, the Curtis Institute of Music-trained string ensemble Time For Three, made up of violinists Zachary De Pue and Nicolas Kendall and bassist Ranaan Meyer, sent a clear message that they were the torch-bearers of this new approach to classical music that defies all traditional genre classifications.

Fueled by new repertoire, that torch burns even brighter on their recent, self-titled release, which marks their debut on the Universal Music Classics label. In addition to tracks co-produced by Rob Moose from Bon Iver and Grammy-winning producer David Lai, the album also features collaborations with an array of outstanding musicians from a variety of musical styles. The album also cuts to the core of who Time for Three is. As Nick Kendall explains: "Like most young people in America now, the three of us grew up listening to all kinds of music – '90s hip-hop, grunge, bluegrass – and we've always played a wide variety of music. We're part of a new generation of classically-trained musicians who approach diverse styles from the same heartfelt place. We hear and feel it all in a similar way, as just music."

"Happy Day," featuring Jake Shimabukuro on ukulele and backed up by sensitive percussion playing, is the perfect opener. Its laid-back feel makes you imagine taking a summer walk along the ocean. Saxophonist Branford Marsalis, himself a musical omnivore, brings out his Louisiana roots during "Queen of Voodoo." Combined with excellent playing by bassist Ranaan Meyer and some snazzy percussion playing, the track takes the listener directly to a New Orleans club. An excellent arrangement of Rachmaninoff's *Vocalise* featuring cellist Alisa Weilerstein is simply stunning, and the

delightful rendition of “Danny Boy” with vocals by Indianapolis-based Lily & Madeline add musical spice to the album.

The highlights of the collaborative tracks are “Winter,” “Everything'll Be Alright,” “Closer” and “What if You,” featuring the vocal prowess of Cleveland native Joshua Radin. If you’re not familiar with Radin, you should be, and this album is a great introduction. His rich voice and ability to sustain long musical phrases make him unique amongst his singer-songwriter peers. With intelligent arrangements by Time for Three added into the mix, the results are astonishingly beautiful, recalling days-gone-by: great singers backed up by a top-notch studio orchestra.

The album also allows De Pue, Kendall and Meyer plenty of time in the spotlight as a trio. “Banjo Love” inventively incorporates the sounds of birds and children over a playful bass line by Ranaan until De Pue and Kendall join in with some fast fiddling. Hand-clapping during the bridge adds a delightful spark. The haunting “Chaconne in Winter,” which De Pue refers to as a “mash,” combines Bach’s d minor chaconne with the main theme from the Bon Iver song, “Calgary.” It’s classic Time for Three, as well as the album’s musical centerpiece.

The placement of the tracks is a key reason the album works as a whole. For example, “Roundabouts” is the perfect prelude to “Winter,” and the Beatles classic “Norwegian Wood” makes a fitting introduction to “What if You.” Finally, “UFO,” from Coldplay’s rock and roll opera album *Mylo Xyloto*, brings the musical journey to a satisfying conclusion.

In the words of jazz great Duke Ellington, “There are two kinds of music. Good music and the other kind.” And this album is 51 minutes of *good* music.

Time for Three will perform on the Tuesday Musical Association series in Akron on Wednesday, October 8. Read a preview [here](#).

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