

Factory Seconds Brass Trio gears up for concerts at BW, Bop Stop, and on the Rocky River Chamber Series

Daniel Hathaway



The amusingly-named Factory Seconds Brass Trio — all second-chair players in The Cleveland Orchestra — will have a busy schedule in February. Trumpeter Jack Sutte, hornist Jesse McCormick, and trombonist Richard Stout will start out the month with two different concerts on Sunday, February 12.

At 3:00 pm, the Trio will play a faculty concert in Gamble Auditorium at Baldwin Wallace titled “Well-Tempered Hindemith: Modernist, Traditionalist, Pragmatist, Artist.” Pianist Christine Fuoco will join each of the players for a solo sonata by Paul Hindemith, and pianist Christina Dahl will take over the bench for Hindemith’s *Ludus Tonalis*, “a counterpoint homage to J.S. Bach.”

At 7:00 pm on the 12th, Factory Seconds will be the featured performers at the Bop Stop as the Baldwin Wallace Bach Festival presents its latest edition of Bach Haus and Brews. The music will include bluegrass, Broadway, jazz, and — of course — Bach.

The Trio will round out its February events with two performances on the Rocky River Chamber Music Society Series at West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church. The first, on Saturday, February 18 at 11:30 am, will be a 45-minute, interactive children’s concert appropriate for ages 3 and up featuring Francis Poulenc’s *Sonata* for brass trio, including storytelling, audience participation, and artwork.

Then on Monday, February 20 at 7:30 pm, Factory Seconds will offer a free concert of more adult fare, including the world premiere of David Loeb's *Madrigaletti*, chansons by Jacques Arcadelt, sinfonias by J.S. Bach, fugues from Paul Hindemith's *Ludus Tonalis*, Norman Sherman's *National Anthem of the Moon*, and trios by Robert Marek and Václav Nelhýbel.

I set up a conference call to chat with the members of the Trio, reaching them in Miami, where they had just finished a rehearsal at the Arsht Center with The Cleveland Orchestra.

Daniel Hathaway: How did you guys decide to form a trio in the first place?

Jesse McCormick: It was either Jack's or Rick's idea. They just approached me and asked if I wanted to be in a trio, so we sat down together and read through some music.

Jack Sutte: Collectively, we've all had an interest in brass chamber music ever since high school. We have a good time rehearsing and performing, and it's just kind of taken off for us. I think as a group we're well-suited. We're each the second chair in our sections, and our personalities line up well both professionally and personally. Forming a group made a lot of sense, and it was very easy to put together.

DH: What was your first gig?

JMC: That was Ingenuity Fest in 2013. We had a new piece called *Mobiles* written for us for that occasion by BW's Clint Needham. I think Rick came up with the name of the group.

DH: How do you divide up your roles in the ensemble?

JMC: We've discovered that we each have different strengths that we bring to the group, but we all do brainstorming for the programming. We started by looking at repertoire written specifically for brass trio and just read through a bunch of pieces to see what we liked. From there, we started to explore having pieces written for us or transcribing other music. Jack has done some nice arrangements for us, and Rick has dabbled in that a bit.

Michael Galloway got in touch with us about a transcription of Hindemith's *Ludus Tonalis* that he'd made, and asked us to try it out. It was a big chunk to bite off, but it's a really cool project that we've programmed for the Hindemith concert at Baldwin Wallace.

JS: In addition to searching in libraries and online, we've been in touch with composers from the U.S., Australia, and Argentina. We've collected so much repertoire that programs come together rather quickly. We always try to arrive at a diverse program that includes some early music and promotes new music.

DH: At Baldwin Wallace, you're each going to play a Hindemith solo sonata with Christine Fuoco on the first half, before joining Christina Dahl for the Ludus Tonalis transcription.

RS: With only three performers, we tend to play all the time, so we like to break things up with solos or duos to keep everybody focused.

JS: We also like to explore flexible formats. Sometimes we print program notes, sometimes we talk from the stage to make more personal connections to the pieces on the program.

DH: What are you planning to play at the Bop Stop on Sunday evening for Bach Haus and Brews?

JS: We'll make some on-the-fly, à la carte decisions once we see what suits the evening and the mood. We'll follow the format of our neighborhood residency programs and figure out a tapas-style, mix-and-match menu — all the composers you've never heard of who write for brass trio!

DH: Let's move on to the Rocky River performances. You'll be putting on a Saturday morning children's program featuring the Poulenc Sonata.

RS: It's one of the most standard pieces in the brass repertoire. The more we played it, the more we began to hear a story in it. We plan to have someone help us narrate the story, have the kids draw in real time with crayons, then collect the pictures and use them as a slideshow during our performance of the piece. That'll be a lot to accomplish in the space of an hour, but we think we can do it. We have a battle plan, so it's just a matter of execution.

DH: Have you worked a lot with kids?

RS: Each of us has a lot of individual experience working with children through the Orchestra and outreach programs, but this is our first time as a trio.

JS: Martha Baldwin, our colleague from the Orchestra, is going to help us put the whole thing together and present it along with us. She has a lot of experience in that area.

DH: Moving on to the Monday evening program, tell me about David Loeb's Madrigaletti that you'll be premiering.

JS: Rick and I studied at Curtis, where David was one of our teachers. It's a short, five-minute work that's very interesting harmonically and musically.

JMC: He wrote to us recently about the title, which means a series of small madrigals. I didn't know David Loeb's work as well as Jack and Rick did, but his music always goes in a direction my ear isn't predicting.

DH: I'm assuming that the Bach trios you're playing at BW are from the Three-part Keyboard Inventions.

RS: Yes, and they don't need a lot of arranging — it's just largely playing from the score, but we have to consider balance and articulation, which will be different for brass instruments.

DH: I've heard you play the Sherman and Marek works on the Music From the Western Reserve series in Hudson. Was the Nelhýbel piece on that program as well?

RS: That's a new piece for us, though we've played the first movement a lot as a stand-alone. It makes a great opener, especially for an outdoor event or a cocktail party. If you need to get people's attention, that really does it. It's very rhythmical, sort of like the Marlboro Man riding through Czechoslovakia. The third is a set of variations. We hear a lot of "Barnacle Bill the Sailor" in it.

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