

ChamberFest Concert 5: “Revolving Thirds: From Darkness to Light” at Dunham Tavern

By Mike Telin



It appears that the stars have aligned for ChamberFest Cleveland’s third season birthday party. Inspired by the number three, Artistic Directors Diana Cohen and Franklin Cohen have put together some truly creative concert programs, a fact that has not gone unnoticed by my reviewer colleagues. And,

as we have come to expect from ChamberFest, the performances by the outstanding group of musicians that have assembled for these concerts are second to none. Such was the case on Sunday, June 22, at Dunham Tavern Museum Barn, when the players - keeping with the number three - scored a Hat-Trick before a capacity crowd during a concert titled “Revolving Thirds: From Darkness to Light,” that featured music by Mozart, Penderecki and Schubert.

In spite of the title, the concert did not begin in darkness, but rather in the bright sunlight — both literally — as it was a sunny afternoon — and figuratively, with Mozart’s virtuosic yet lighthearted *Quartet for Oboe and Strings*, K. 370. The work is essentially a concerto in miniature, requiring a soloist of technical agility coupled with musical sensitivity, and oboist Alex Klein most certainly possesses both. Klein easily tossed off even the most demanding phrases with finesse during the opening allegro. The lyrical adagio was operatic. Klein’s remarkably fast and nimble fingers were again on display during the humorous Rondeau. His extraordinary playing together with the excellent assistance of violinist Amy Schwartz Moretti, violist Dimitri Murrath, and cellist Julie Albers, made this a performance for the ChamberFest memory book.



Composed in 1993, Krzysztof Penderecki's *Quartet for Clarinet, Violin, Viola and Cello* is an emotionally dark and brooding work that in the wrong hands could come off sounding heavy and depressing. Fortunately, Sunday's performance by Schwartz Moretti, Murrath, cellist Gabriel Cabezas and clarinetist Franklin Cohen was breathtaking in all the best ways possible. The incredible blend of the ensemble resulted in a haunting Notturmo. Their crisp staccato passages in the nervous but brief Scherzo transitioned perfectly into the waltz-like demonic Serenade. The final movement, Abschied (Farewell), showcased some very steady control and spot-on intonation by Schwartz Moretti in the highest register against Cabezas's low drone. Throughout, Cohen's rich, dark tone emerged and retreated into the ensemble with chilling effect.



The second half of the program was devoted to Schubert's *String Quartet No. 15 in G*. Like the Penderecki, it takes accomplished players to bring Schubert's final quartet to life. But this dream team quartet of violinists Yura Lee and David Bowlin, violist Dimitri Murrath and cellist Julie Albers gave a performance worthy of a quartet of long association. It was difficult to believe that such a stunning performance could be given by four musicians who until this year's festival had never worked together as a quartet. From the opening Allegro molto moderato through the final Allegro assai, the quartet performed

with a full-bodied sound, producing the perfect balance between tension and lyricism. Never did the pitch wander nor the rhythm falter. In fact, by the middle of the third movement, I wondered how much longer they could sustain such perfection, but they did. Perhaps they might consider performing together more frequently.

The combination of the Dunham Tavern Museum Barn's warm acoustics and semi-rustic atmosphere make a wonderful venue for chamber music. Hopefully it will remain one of ChamberFest's performance spaces in the future.

Photos by Gary Adams.

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