

Lamentation, Collaboration, Supplication, Celebration: Credo Faculty Recital in memory of Stephen Clapp

By Daniel Hautzinger



Constructing memorial concerts is a tricky affair. They have to strike a balance between mourning and celebration, incorporating personal stories and meaningful pieces without becoming maudlin. On July 11 in Oberlin Conservatory's Warner Concert Hall, the faculty of Credo Music successfully navigated these pitfalls for a moving tribute to their friend and fellow faculty member, violinist Stephen Clapp.

Oberlin, under the auspices of Credo, was the perfect venue to honor Clapp's memory. He graduated from the conservatory in 1961, returned to teach there from 1978-1994, founded the Oberlin Trio, was acting dean of the conservatory in 1985, and was presented with an honorary doctorate in 2011. He served on

the faculty of Credo Music from its genesis, fifteen years ago. Beyond Oberlin, Clapp taught at Juilliard from 1987-2007, as well as serving as its dean from 1994-2007.

The concert was divided into four parts: "Lamentation," "Collaboration," "Supplication," and "Celebration." Credo's Artistic Director and viola faculty member Peter Slowik introduced each with touching anecdotes about Clapp, emphasizing his humility and constant service to others.

Steuart Pincombe opened "Lamentation" with a cry from the heart, playing viola da gamba and singing his own setting of Psalm 13. He sang the simple, quasi-medieval melody in an unpretentious tenor, lingering on suspensions and slipping movingly from minor into major in the redemptive last few lines.

After violist Matthew Michelic and pianist James Howsmon performed Zoltán Kodály's subdued *Adagio*, Michael Davis and Lee Joiner paired up for three violin duos. Davis's tone was flute-like in Bartók's "A Fairy Tale," which was followed by the anguished dissonances of the same composer's "Sadness," an apt piece for this occasion. Donald Erb's *Children's Song*, dedicated to the children of Oklahoma City, was eerily beautiful, with muted glissandos mimicking sirens and glassy harmonics expressing the pain felt at the loss of any life.

"Collaboration" struck a more light-hearted note with Mozart's *Piano Quartet in E-flat*, K. 493. Kangwon Kim, violin, and Kathryn Steely, viola, joined Howsmon and Pincombe, this time playing cello. They subtly shaded Mozart's shocking harmonic feints while delighting in the easy pleasure of collaboration.

Hymns represented Clapp's humility and devotion to service in "Supplication." In a last minute addition to the program, cellist Ann Williams and pianist Karen Burgman displayed poignant eloquence in "Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead us," arranged by Paul Jones. Slowik, also accompanied by Burgman, played feelingly in sincere renditions of "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing" and "Be Thou My Vision," both arranged by Burgman.

"Celebration" ended the evening, commemorating and rejoicing in Clapp's accomplished life. Current Credo students as well as alumni and faculty created a massive sound under Slowik's conducting in the first and last movements of Ernest Bloch's dramatic *Concerto Grosso* for strings and piano obbligato. The final movement, a Fugue, provided a fitting illustration of grief in miniature: beginning in turbulent minor-key sadness, it ends in uplifting major, just as loss leads to a celebration of a beloved person's life.

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