

Chartreuse to perform at Oberlin's Clonick Hall and Cleveland's Bop Stop

by Mike Telin



Chartreuse: a French liqueur made by Carthusian Monks since 1737.

Chartreuse: a color halfway between yellow and green.

Chartreuse: a contemporary music ensemble formed at the Oberlin Conservatory in 2011 by violinist Myra Hinrichs, violist Carrie Frey and cellist Helen Newby.

Chartreuse Plus/Minus: The title of the ensemble's six-concert tour.

On Wednesday, January 7 at 8:00 pm in Clonick Hall at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, [Chartreuse](#) will present a concert featuring the premiere of Theophilus Chandler's *Image Deposition*. The evening will also include Joan Arnau Pamies's *[IVflbclVlVln/c]* for flute, bass clarinet, violin, and cello, the full premiere of Kurt Isaacson's *as a family of civilian ghosts phase-shifts through the fog lights*, David Bird's *pluck.divide.cut*, and Katherine Young's *graveled crumbled strewn* with video projection (premiere of this version). Hinrichs, Frey and Newby will be joined by flutist Hannah Hammel, clarinetist Zachary Good and bassoonist Ben Roidl-Ward. The concert is part of Oberlin's Winter Term Chamber Music Festival.

Why the decision to title their tour Plus/Minus? "We've been thinking about that for a while," violist Carrie Frey said during a telephone conversation. "We've played with Zach Goode, our clarinetist, in the past, and we've gone back and forth on whether or not we should refer to Chartreuse as the all-inclusive ensemble name, or as Chartreuse and

friends. So we thought, why not Plus/Minus, since we are collaborating with other people to perform some larger ensemble pieces as well as playing duos.”

On Thursday, January 8 at 7:30 pm, Chartreuse will take their Plus/Minus tour to the Bop Stop in Cleveland for a concert featuring works for smaller forces. The program includes the premiere of Peter Kramer’s *Waxen* for viola and cello, as well as Olga Neuwirth’s *In Nacht und Eis* for bassoon and cello, Philippe Hurel’s *Loops I* for solo flute, Daniel Tacke’s *übermalung von JSB* and Ann Cleare’s *Dysmorphia* for viola and cello.

In addition to Oberlin and Cleveland, the Plus/Minus tour will also make stops in New York City and Chicago. Frey points out that arranging the tour was a group effort. “Since we live in different areas of the country, we delegated these activities.” Frey, who is currently part of the Contemporary Performance Program at Manhattan School of Music, acted as the New York point person. “I booked the shows and have been in touch with the New York press.”

Violinist Myra Hinrichs now lives in Chicago and is a member of the Chicago Civic Orchestra. “Myra and Zach Good are both in Chicago, so they arranged that show. Both Ben Roidl-Ward and Hannah Hammel are still students at Oberlin, so they were in charge of the Oberlin and Cleveland performances. They even applied for the Oberlin grant that helped to make all of this possible,” Frey explained. “I’m really happy about the Clonick concert, especially because it will be part of the Winter Term Festival.” The group’s cellist, Helen Newby, is currently pursuing a Master’s at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Frey thinks it’s great to have people in different areas of the country. “This way we can have in-person meetings with venues and composers.”

Establishing relationships with composers has been a driving force for the ensemble from the Trio’s beginning. “We sort of ended up in the contemporary music sphere at Oberlin because we were the resident ensemble for a composition class. In fact, the three of us met because we were playing so many pieces by student composers, so it was natural that people wanted to write pieces for us. That is what we find to be the most interesting – working directly with composers and stretching the boundaries of what they think we can do and what we think we can do.”

Taking charge of their own destiny has been another driving force for the group. In January 2013, supported by a Kickstarter campaign and a Creativity and Leadership Fund grant from Oberlin Conservatory, Chartreuse presented concerts in Norway at the Norges Musikkhøgskole in Oslo, Hamar's Toneheim Folkehøgskole, and the University in Tromsø.

It is no secret that Scandinavia has a flourishing contemporary music scene, but why did they choose Norway? “For one thing, Myra has ancestry there. We were also playing the

Grieg quartet and we began to wonder what was happening in Norwegian contemporary music.” With help from friends and from Oberlin TIMARA professor Peter Swendsen, who did a Fulbright in Norway, Frey discovered some Norwegian composers with whom the group had a mutual connection. “So we decided to see if we could establish a relationship with them, and we did.” Chartreuse now enjoys fruitful collaborations with composers Martin Rane Bauck and Tyler Futrell, whose upcoming trio they will premiere.

In addition to helping fund the group’s trip to Norway, how did the Creativity and Leadership grants help them focus on what they wanted to do in the future? “The grants enabled us to tour and meet composers. We also toured with our band *Deturtle* that same summer with another Oberlin grant. So the grants did help us see that putting concerts and tours together ourselves could be a reality.”

Frey pointed out that finding money to tour has become their *modus operandi*. “Touring is our favorite thing to do. It allows us to play the same piece multiple times, which is good for us because we become more comfortable with the pieces and can express them better to the audience. And it’s good for the composers because their pieces can be heard in three to six different cities instead of just once. With every tour we get better at organizing them, and with this Plus/Minus tour, we are actually able to pay our composers.”

In addition to the Oberlin and Cleveland performances, on Monday January 5 at 4:00 pm in Heiser Auditorium at Kendall at Oberlin, Chartreuse will present an Interactive Workshop and Performance. Myra Hinrichs, Carrie Frey and Helen Newby will take an informal look into contemporary music-making. The trio will play recent works and talk about how today’s composers and players think about and perform music.

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