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ChARTing New Paths at Arts Renaissance Tremont (Nov. 15)

by Daniel Hathaway



On Sunday afternoon, November 15, Arts Renaissance Tremont began its 35th season at Pilgrim Church, hosting the most recent iteration of the Oberlin Trio in a sublime performance of Felix Mendelssohn's d-minor Piano Trio. The program also included a mesmerizing work for solo violin and wrapped the afternoon up with a light-hearted musical tale about a turkey, friendship, and love (seasonal note: the turkey survived to tell about it).

Violinist Amy Lee, cellist Dmitry Kouzov, and pianist Haewon Song began the well-paced Mendelssohn with a lovely, well-balanced sound, and immediately established a fabulous level of ensemble playing. The many subtle shifts in tempo were always perfectly in sync, and Song's nimble articulation lightened the musical texture throughout.

Song began the Andante with long, emotional phrases and Lee's soaring violin lines contrasted nicely with Kouzov's pizzicatos. Although the Trio set a brisk tempo for the Scherzo, Song made easy work of her technical passages, and the three players tossed off the ending with a shrug.

The finale was thrilling from beginning to end. Kouzov shone on the cello lines, and Lee and Song played with wonderful, burnished tone.

Lee, who recently stepped down as associate concertmaster of The Cleveland Orchestra, gave a stellar performance of Delores White's *Blues Dialogues,* which shows influences ranging from Blues traditions and Thelonious Monk to Béla Bartók.

Producing a beautifully phrased, free-flowing lyrical line, Lee leaned into improvisational gestures, and ventured into the extreme registers of her instrument. One Gershwin-esque movement was fast and funky with jazzy note-bending, and another featured fast scale passages with string crossings and left hand pizzicatos. The audience reacted enthusiastically to Lee's performance and White's daughter was present to take a bow for her late composer mother.



The program took a sharp turn with the world premiere of Anthony Dilorenzo's *Cecil the Turkey*, a charming musical cartoon that might be subtitled "Peter and the Wolf meets L'Histoire du Soldat." Some of the performers met Dilorenzo as fellow students at the Curtis Institute and have admired his cinematic music for years.

For this occasion, ART fielded an all-star cast including Amy Lee & Yun Ting Lee (violins), Rebekahh Edwards & Joanna Patterson Zakany (violas), Dmitry Kouzov (cello), Jeffrey Rathbun (oboe), Haewon Song (piano), Alyson Rzeszotarski (percussion), and WCLV's Bill O'Connell (narrator).

Set in Turkey Town, a far-off place where animals walk and talk, the story centers around Cecil the Turkey, who plays the piano and takes his instrument wherever he goes.

Cecil begins every day playing his favorite tune with his cellist friend Semour, a bullfrog who keeps his instrument polished to a high gloss. Off on an adventure at sunrise after Seymour greets the dawn with an evocative solo, they meet Karloff Kristoffsky, a furry-hatted, viola-playing hound dog and manage to stop Cecil's runaway piano, retrieving a picnic basket from inside just in time for lunch.

Things take another sharp turn when Cecil comes under the spell of the fiddle-playing Bluefooted Boobie, of whom legend has it that if you look her in the eye, you'll fall hopelessly in love with her (cue a tango!) The only antidote is to get the Boobie to see her own reflection, and happily, the friends have Seymour's cello for a mirror.

The moral? Never underestimate the power of friends or a shiny cello.

The performers produced sparkling readings of Dilorenzo's often complicated musical episodes. Paired with O'Connell's skillful narration, music and words created a world of fantasy where turkeys are inseparable from their pianos and Bluefooted Boobies admire their likenesses in glistening cellos to their peril.

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