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Sounds of America

Gramophone's guide to the classical scene in the US and Canada



Reviews Music inspired by an African explorer, Chilean oppression and New York State » **The Scene Highlights** - [page VII](#)

Beethoven

Triple Concerto, Op 56°. Piano Trio No 1, Op 1 No 1
Claremont Trio;
San Francisco Ballet Orchestra / Martin West
Bridge © BRIDGE9395 (66° • DDD)



Three-way Beethoven from New York trio in San Francisco

Along with the new recording by The Knights for Sony, this performance by the Claremont Trio (named after an apartment on Claremont Avenue in New York City) shows how dramatically powerful Beethoven's Triple Concerto can be. As recorded here, it rises up and challenges his other major concertos for supremacy. The key for the Claremont is the 'three musketeers' thing, celebrating the 16-year-old Archduke Rudolf's selection as the composer's student and allowing themselves to be intoxicated by the profusion of opportunities for each soloist to entertain and elevate in a dialogue which goes on for literally the entire piece.

With Donna Kwang standing in for Rudolf as accomplice in the high jinks, willing to keep her pals moving with plenty of fire and dash, Emily and Julia Bruskin add individual touches of phrasing and colour, applied with great virtuosity and derring-do. Julia turns her cello solo in the *Larghetto* into an extraordinary moment of infinity; no less notable is when identical sister Emily, with tangible affection, signals the cello's segue into the last movement. In that movement, the three soloists alternatively play at being skydiving rivals and passionate soulmates, digging into each of the music's iconic episodes with roguish attitude and style, driving the musical experience to way higher levels than being just a party animal.

The Claremont give Beethoven's First Piano Trio an equally involved, vivid performance, capturing the young composer showing off his wares, attentive to the poetry and sentiment between the thrilling virtuosity.

Laurence Vittes

Brady

Symphony No 3, 'Atacama'
Tim Brady *elec gtr*
VivaVoce; Bradyworks / Peter Schubert
ATMA Classique © ACD2 2676 (51° • DDD)

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GRAMOPHONE *talks to...*

Lori Sims

The pianist on her 'American Classics' recording of Copland, Weber, Griffes and Barber

Why are these pieces 'American Classics'?

They're all pretty old – they're not modern American pieces as such because they were all written in the early 20th century and they tend a lot more towards a Romantic bent. Even the [Ben] Weber *Fantasia* – which is probably the most modern piece, incorporating some serial elements – is still in the Romantic vein. Also, 'American Classics' is a bit of a play on the fact that I'm American, I was brought up in America, and I studied here mostly.

How did you choose the repertoire?

My friend Dr Donna McHugh was a student of the late William Masselos, a fantastic pianist who endeavoured to bring American piano music into the concert halls. I borrowed certain repertoire ideas from him. He played the Copland Variations all the time, and his close friend was Weber, whose music he really believed in. He loved Griffes, so I chose his gorgeous Roman Sketches. As for the Barber Sonata, Masselos wouldn't have played it, but it would have been in his realm.



Do the pieces sound at all similar?

There's a strain of Americanism that runs through them but they certainly represent the different styles of American composers. It sounds a bit pithy but, like New York City, anything goes in American music. You have all these different influences that are competing and cohabitating and I like that – it's a little wild, like America then and even now.

Which was the biggest discovery for you?

Definitely the Weber. You can't even buy the music – I borrowed it from my friend. When I first read through it I didn't like it but then I looked at it again and was fascinated by its rawness. With this music, you sense a lot of influences that aren't amalgamated, so you hear Berg in the first variation, later Scriabin, and then French impressionism... it's almost like each variation represents a different composer.



Canadian Brady's symphonic response to Pinochet's regime

Oppression in Chile during the regime of General Augusto Pinochet is the subject of Tim Brady's Third Symphony, *Atacama*, a work of haunting and explosive power. It receives an intensely vibrant performance on this new disc featuring the Montreal-based vocal ensemble VivaVoce and the instrumental group Bradyworks.

The Canadian composer was inspired to write the work after reading *Symphony*, a collection by the Chilean-Canadian poet Elías

Letelier Ruz, who paints horrifying images of life under Pinochet using the metaphor of Atacama, the desert on the Pacific Ocean in Chile and Peru said to be the driest in the world. Brady's six-movement symphony employs eight Letelier poems – three in the final movement – that define various states of mind in a spectrum of moods and musical colours. The chorus, singing in Spanish, declaim lines furiously or float hushed, mesmerising phrases either *a cappella* or with the accompaniment of an orchestra of 11 instruments (here including Brady on electric guitar). The score is an amalgam of styles, embracing minimalist ideas, elements of

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