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Notable Women

TRIOS BY TODAY'S FEMALE COMPOSERS

AUERBACH
GARROP
HIGDON
SCHWENDINGER
THOMAS
TOWER



LINCOLN
TRIO

CEDILLE

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Notable Women

Lera Auerbach
Trio for violin, cello, and piano
(1992/1996)* (11:35)

- ① I. Prelude (1:33)
- ② II. Andante (5:32)
- ③ III. Presto (4:25)

④ Stacy Garrop
Seven for piano trio (1997–98)*
(11:44)

Jennifer Higdon
Piano Trio (2003) (14:03)

- ⑤ Pale Yellow (8:27)
- ⑥ Fiery Red (5:33)

*This recording is made possible in
part through a generous grant from
The Aaron Copland Fund for Music*

Lincoln Trio

⑦ Laura Elise Schwendinger
C'è la Luna Questa Sera?
(1998/2006)* (5:25)

⑧ Augusta Read Thomas
Moon Jig (2005) (4:40)

⑨ Joan Tower
Trio Cavany (2007)* (19:14)

TT: (67:20)

*World Premiere Recording

Lincoln Trio
Desirée Ruhstrat, violin
David Cunliffe, cello
Marta Aznavoorian, piano

Piano Trios by American Women Composers

Program notes by the composers and Andrea Lamoreaux

A popular form of home music-making in 18th-century Vienna, trios for piano, violin, and cello were transformed into concert music during the 19th and 20th centuries but still retain their sense of intimacy and personal conversation. The six trios on this CD, all by living American women composers, reflect the genre's twofold advantage of providing an opportunity for ensemble playing — from emphatic unison passages to flowing contrapuntal sections — plus the chance for each player to shine in a solo role.

Lera Auerbach: Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano (1992/1996)

In 1991, at the age of 17, during a concert tour in America, six months before the fall of the

Soviet Union, I decided to defect. The following year, 1992, when the first two movements of this trio were written, was perhaps the most difficult of my life. I was alone, and did not know whether I would ever see my family again. Many of the works of that period were not completed until a few years later; this trio is one of them. The last movement, Presto, was written four years later, in 1996. The first movement is marked Preludium Misterioso. Its melodic line is angular with steady rhythm, interrupted by accents and syncopations, and the writing is polyphonic in nature. The second movement, Andante, is the emotional center of the work. It is a lyrical and tragic dialogue between violin and cello, with piano providing a sustained harmonic pedal. In this trio the whole structure is built as one continuous crescendo towards

the end. Crescendo is not meant in the dynamic sense, but rather as a buildup of the gravity of the material: the first movement is a short Scherzo, the second an emotionally-charged Andante, and the third, Presto, a toccata with its climatic modulation to C major. The last movement requires virtuosity in all instruments. The main material of the third movement is characterized by its obsessive quality, while its middle section is contrastingly still and dead. The main themes of the first and second movement are incorporated and intertwined with the material of the toccata. In the climax of the third movement, all the main themes of the trio become one.

The Prelude begins with that angular theme in the piano, taken up by the cello and then the violin (starting it a fifth higher). There are indications for violin and cello to play “sul

ponticello,” meaning the bow is near the instrument’s bridge, producing a dry and detached sonority; the piano part is sometimes marked staccato and “secco” (dry). As the Prelude moves toward its peaceful C major close, the cello plays eerie glissandos, passages where the fingers slide rapidly up and down the strings. The score says: “Imitating the cries of seagulls.”

The Andante gives the piano a slowed-down variant of the Prelude’s main theme, supporting a lyrical, melancholy cello solo: there’s a momentary blues-y sound before the violin enters with a soaring, highly chromatic melody that proceeds in counterpoint with the cello’s material. A brief piano solo takes up the cello’s theme and decorates it with a “glass-like sound.” As the movement builds up intensity, the violin is asked to play “flautando” (literally, “flute-like”): the bow is drawn across the strings near the fingerboard, producing yet

another unusual sound. The Andante dies away to a quiet ending in C.

The Presto is a marked contrast of both mood and texture: agitated and rapidly-paced, it features emphatic piano chords and octaves, flying 16th-note passages, and double- and triple-stops for the strings. The sense of headlong perpetual motion is enhanced by frequent dynamic markings of fortissimo, contrasted by sudden indications to play softly. The relatively lean sounds of "sul ponticello" and "flautando" appear again. The brief "still and dead" midsection is marked Misterioso to recall the first movement. Heavy chords and string tremolos over a pounding piano lead to a triple-forte final C.

Stacy Garrop: Seven

(1997–98; in memory of my father, Norman Garrop)

The genesis of Seven emerged from two separate sources. The

first is Anne Sexton's evocative poem "Seven Times" in which the speaker longs for release from life. Upon dying, she is surprised to find a quiet, peaceful place:

*I died seven times
in seven ways...*

The second source was the TV show Star Trek Voyager. One of humanity's worst enemies are the Borg, which are a half-machine, half-organic species who assimilate all species they encounter and add them to their collective consciousness. The crew of Voyager managed to sever one Borg's connection with the collective, thus leaving the Borg isolated and human for the first time since she had been abducted as a young girl. This Borg, named Seven of Nine, found the isolation of being an individual almost unbearable for numerous episodes before

she began realizing her full potential in her new human life. As I began writing the trio, I saw a connection between Sexton's poem and Seven of Nine. Both represent change. Anne Sexton's speaker craves death. Seven of Nine fought her forced change from collective consciousness to isolated individualism. Neither character expected what waited for them on the other side. This change is represented musically near the end of the piece. You might imagine the change to be Sexton's moment of death, or of Seven's switch from Borg drone to human.

Seven, in seven interlinked sections with frequent tempo contrasts, features several sonic special effects, with particular demands on the pianist. She must hit the instrument's strings with the palm of her hand, physically mute some of the strings, hit numerous keys at once, play with

the forearm, and then quickly shift back to playing normally, while using the sustaining pedal for sudden punctuations. The string players are asked to play with and without mutes, to play "sul ponticello" and "col legno" — with the wooden part of the bow. They also play frequent tremolos and glissandos plus harmonics: faint sounds produced by placing the fingers very lightly onto the strings instead of pressing down onto the fingerboard. These shifting sonorities serve to evoke the strange states of being Garrop had in mind while the many fast-paced passages and frequent fortissimo playing keep us simultaneously anchored in the here-and-now. Often the players are asked to "freeze," incorporating sudden pauses into the music. A thematic three-note motive emerges at the start in the cello and the pianist's left hand: starting on D, it moves up a half step, then down a whole step. Often hidden by other motives,

it recurs steadily throughout each section to unify the work in the midst of often-wild commentary. The fourth section, marked Light and Playful, gives violin and cello a melody that's soon echoed in the piano part. In section five, insistently repeated notes give way to a reiteration of the basic motive in the strings with wide octave displacement. This portion ends with a passage "like a machine out of control." It's succeeded by a rhythmically free, gorgeously serene passage before Tempo I returns "machine-like; reminiscent of beginning." Playing pizzicato, violin and cello repeat the three-note motive very quietly while the pianist strikes the instrument's lowest strings, and *Seven* ends "like a machine slowing to a stop."

Jennifer Higdon: Piano Trio

(2003; dedicated to Joan Tower; commissioned by the Bravo-Vail Music Festival)

Can music reflect colors and can colors be reflected in music? I have always been fascinated with the connection between painting and music. In my composing, I often picture colors as if I were spreading them on a canvas, except I do so with melodies, harmonies, and through the instruments themselves. The colors that I have chosen in both of the movement titles and in the music itself, reflect very different moods and energy levels, which I find fascinating, as it begs the question, can colors actually convey a mood?

The first movement, a moderate Andante, is subtitled Pale Yellow. Listening to it, other colors might come to mind, but they would all be pastels. If the movement were a work of visual art, it would definitely be a representational painting. The opening key is a radiant A major, with flowing themes presented in

traditional diatonic harmonies in which triads and the interval of a major sixth are emphasized. The three instruments play mostly together, with brief soloistic interludes or passages of imitation. There is no transition to the minor mode. The movement intensifies with increasing sixteenth-note patterns and dotted rhythms until a sudden key change, with similar motives to the opening, arrives in another serene-sounding key, B-flat major. This transition from a key of three sharps to one of two flats imparts a subtle, almost indefinable change to the sound. A quiet, sustained ending gives a hint of what is to come, as a B-flat chord is enriched with intervals of a major seventh and a major second: just a slight touch of dissonance.

Fiery Red is the name for the blazingly fast second movement. Here the color is quite definite: the music is indeed fiery. Beginning with abrupt sixteenth-note patterns,

huge string chords, and octaves in the bass of the piano, the movement soon turns to brilliant up-and-down runs for the strings, complemented by a fast-moving, dissonant piano part accentuated by glissandos. The dynamic is loud, with sudden softer contrasts; the strings are asked to play "sul ponticello" and to use harmonics. Then as the piano part becomes less insistent, a brief interlude emerges with ostinatos — repeated notes and double-stops — for violin and keyboard. These ostinato passages are interspersed with sixteenth-note passages reminiscent of the movement's opening. After some measures in which all three instruments play in high registers, there comes a recapitulation of sorts with the return of the up-and-down runs while, rondo-like, the ostinato pattern returns in its midst. At the end, the piano plays increasingly powerful chords until all is suddenly resolved on an A major chord.

Laura Elise Schwendinger:
C'è la Luna Questa Sera? (1998/2006;
in memory of Donald Martino)

C'è la Luna Questa Sera? [Is There a Moon Tonight?] was inspired by the moonlight reflected on the surface of Lake Como. After spending a lovely and productive month at the Bellagio Rockefeller Center in 1997, my memories of the evenings there revolve around standing out on the veranda and watching the moonlight dance off the water. Surrounded by the dramatic views of the Dolomite Mountains to the east, and the Alps to the north, the setting was magical, yet mysteriously enigmatic at night, as the purple hue of the Dolomites gave the surrounding visual frame a dark aura of ambiguity. The other side of the Dolomite Mountains was visible only when there was a full moon, and even then the color lent an almost ethereal

ambience to the scene. The work was originally for violin, cello and percussion and was transcribed specifically for the Lincoln Trio, to which this version is dedicated.

The piece unfolds in one continuous and rhapsodic movement. The violin and cello are often placed in extremely high registers and sustained over multiple measures. When the violin is not sustaining high notes, it frequently plays in octave-separated unisons with the cello, with the same “bell-like” material heard in the opening piano part. The thematic patterns that emerge are characterized by augmented intervals: fourths (tritones), fifths, and sixths, with the rhythmic patterns becoming more intricate. Slowly a motivic figure emerges, characterized by a three-fast-note-turn figure leading to a sustained one. Beginning with a strongly accented note, the piece immediately drops to a quiet dynamic level then gradually increases toward

a midpoint. A long unison melody, very lyrical, very moonlit, is presented mezzo-piano by violin and cello, with rapid piano figuration to provide an undercurrent of a new momentum. This momentum leads to a very high-register cello solo, and to the return of stratospheric notes in the violin part. Toward the end, the cello restates the motive with the three-fast-note-turn figure, over which the violin plays an extended tremolo. The piano part ends after some emphatic forte notes, and underneath the violin’s high song, the cello gets the final word.

Augusta Read Thomas: Moon Jig
(2005)

Traditionally, a Jig (or Gigue) has been a lively dance with leaping movements, comprised of two sections each repeated. Somewhat of a cross between jazz — Monk, Coltrane, Tatum, Miles, etc. — and classical — Bartók,

Brahms, Stravinsky, etc. — Moon Jig can be heard as a series of outgrowths and variations, which are organic and, at every level, concerned with transformations and connections. The piano serves as the protagonist, as well as fulcrum point on and around which all musical force-fields rotate, bloom, and proliferate. The piano part starts with (and returns four times with) a low-register jig, which is an earthy, punchy, rhythmic, asymmetrical walking bass. The second, contrasting section (which is also repeated four times) is always led by the strings, which play long, animated, expressive lines. This very short work alternates five times total between these two sections: piano-jig, tutti, piano-jig, tutti, piano-jig and so forth, yet as the repetitions proceed, the two musics eventually blend together. One clear-cut example

is when the string pizzicatos blend into the low-register, jazzy piano rhythms. A multi-faceted merging process finally results in one long sweep of music rushing to the end in the highest registers of the trio, as if the Jig leaped skyward and moonward. Moon Jig, commissioned by the Music Institute of Chicago, was premiered by the Lincoln Trio on May 5, 2005, at the Four Seasons Hotel in Chicago at a private party.

Thomas's moon metaphor is strikingly different from Schwendinger's: the moon here seems a spectacular goal to be reached via rhythmic intensity, rather than Schwendinger's source of evocative, ambient light. The piano's first iteration of its jazzy walking bass is marked to sound like "Funky, asymmetrical, sporadic jabs." The composer uses the indication *Rubato* right at the beginning to indicate rhythmic freedom. With the strings' first entry we hear the cello's insistent

repeated notes in a high register, underpinning the violin's exuberant, improvisatory motive. From this point on, the entrances and exits of the three instruments are abrupt and unexpected, with sudden accents, quick dynamic changes, emphatic chords, and rapid shifts between pizzicato (plucked) and arco (bowed) figures in both string parts. The violin's opening figure returns to punctuate the work's progress toward a rapidly-accelerating fortissimo conclusion.

Joan Tower: Trio Cavany (2007)

Trio Cavany was commissioned by La Jolla Music Festival, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and the Virginia Arts Festival. It is dedicated to violinist Cho-Liang Lin, who gave the premiere in the summer of 2007 at the La Jolla festival with cellist Gary Hoffman and pianist Andre-Michel Schub. The title covers the three states the festivals are in.

[The trio] is in one movement . . . and features all three instruments in solo and in combination.

Trio Cavany emphasizes the solo potential of each instrument within a piano trio, bringing them together into a unified whole, but with constant solo statements along the way. It begins with a pianissimo violin statement of the basic three-note motive that will constantly recur, in various registers and rhythms, to unify the work: it drops down one step, then rises by a minor third. The cello also enters very high-pitched, and the two strings play in tandem for a while, imitating and echoing each other, until they drop out in favor of an extended, dramatic, and virtuosic piano solo. The cello then presents a melody derived from the three-note motive and is soon rejoined by the violin. Another lengthy piano passage is accompanied by sustained, muted notes from the violin and cello, then rhythmic interest is emphasized in a

section of two-against-three patterns. Double-stops and sixteenth notes become prominent in the string parts as we lead up to a "drammatico" cello solo followed by another piano statement.

The violin gets its solo chance with a virtuosic passage that ends with a restatement of the three-note motive. This is followed by a new section, analogous to a slow movement, launched in a mellow 6/4 time. There's a sense of distance here, with another high-register cello part and pianissimo chords in the piano. The section grows in dynamic intensity toward reiterated fortissimo piano octaves. The three-note motive, in cello, then in violin, takes us to a brief piano solo statement, where the pace momentarily slows down as the composer indicates, "broaden."

With violin and cello soon rejoining the piano, we're led onward to a final section, announced by repeated

dotted rhythms that become insistent ostinatos for all three players. These quickly become powerful fortissimo octaves, first in the piano, then in all three parts, with a return to the two-against-three rhythms. The violin reaches a high point that is almost a scream. Syncopated patterns and rapid imitations, another brief piano solo, and a sudden unison passage bring us to the final measures, with strong, dissonant chords and a final fortissimo accent.

Andrea Lamoreaux is music director of 98.7 WFMT, Chicago's classical experience.

THE LINCOLN TRIO

The celebrated Chicago-based Lincoln Trio, made up of Desirée Ruhstrat, violin, David Cunliffe, cello and Marta Aznavoorian, piano, has been described by *The Strad* as "sensational" and "bewitching."

Formed in 2003, the Lincoln Trio takes its name from their home, the heartland of the United States, the land of Lincoln. The trio has been praised for its polished presentations of well-known chamber works and its ability to forge new paths with contemporary repertoire. The group's reputation as a first-rate ensemble draws an eclectic audience of sophisticated music lovers, young admirers of contemporary programs, and students discovering chamber music for the first time. The Trio has performed throughout the US, including appearances at Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall, the Indianapolis Symphony Beethoven Chamber Music Series, Lane Concert Series, Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concerts, Music in the Loft, and the Ravinia Festival, which chose the trio to perform at the Lincoln Bicentennial celebration in Springfield, Illinois, with President Barack Obama. Top prize winner of the 2008 Masterplayers

International Competition in Venice, Italy, and the only ensemble chosen by the Young Performers Career Advancement program to be showcased at Carnegie/Weill Hall in 2011, the Lincoln Trio is currently ensemble-in-residence at the Music Institute of Chicago. The 2011–12 season will see the trio tour the U.S.,

Europe, South America, and Asia, playing repertoire from *Notable Women* at each engagement.

For more information, please visit: <http://lincolntrio.com/>



Photo by Marc Hauser

Desirée Ruhstrat

David Cunliffe

Marta Aznavoorian

COMPOSERS

One of the most widely performed composers of the new generation, **Lera Auerbach** (b.1973) is the youngest composer on the roster of Hamburg's prestigious international music publishing company, Hans Sikorski. A virtuoso performer, Auerbach continues the great tradition of pianist-composers of the 19th and 20th centuries. Her music is characterized by its stylistic freedom and juxtaposition of tonal and atonal musical language. Auerbach's commissions include ballets, operas, symphonies, concertos, string quartets, and numerous other chamber and solo instrumental works. She is currently writing a full-length opera based on her original play *Gogol*. Lera Auerbach's work as a composer and pianist is regularly featured in prestigious venues around the world including Washington's Kennedy Center, Moscow's Bolshoi Theater,

New York's Carnegie Hall, Tokyo's Opera City, and Chicago's Symphony Center. Auerbach has served as artist- and composer-in-residence for many institutions. In 2011, she will be composer-in-residence with the Dresden Staatskapelle orchestra and the Semper Opera of Dresden.

For more information, please visit:
<http://www.leraauerbach.com>

A composer creating music of great expressive power and masterful technical control, **Stacy Garrop** (b. 1969) has received numerous awards, commissions, and grants, including the Detroit Symphony Orchestra's Elaine Lebenbom Memorial Award, Raymond and Beverly Sackler Music Composition Prize, two Barlow Endowment commissions, Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble's Harvey Gaul Competition, and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's First Hearing Composition Competition. Her music is published by Theodore Presser

Company and recorded by Cedille Records, Innova, Equilibrium, and Ravello Records. She has attended residences at the Aspen Music Festival, Atlantic Center for the Arts, Banff Centre for the Arts, MacDowell Colony, Millay Colony, Ragdale Foundation, Wellesley Composers Conference, and Yaddo, and has served as a composer-in-residence of Chicago's Music in the Loft chamber series as well as the Albany Symphony. Garrop is an Associate Professor of Composition at Roosevelt University in Chicago.

For more information, please visit:
<http://www.garrop.com>

Pulitzer Prize-winner **Jennifer Higdon** (b. 1962) is one of America's most performed living composers. Higdon received the 2010 Pulitzer Prize in Music for her Violin Concerto. She is the recipient of many other awards, including a Pew Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and

two awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Her list of commissioners range from the Philadelphia Orchestra to the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra; from eighth blackbird to the Tokyo String Quartet; and from The President's Own Marine Band to individual artists such as Hilary Hahn. Higdon's works have been recorded on over three dozen CDs. Most recently, her Percussion Concerto won the 2010 Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Classical Composition. Higdon holds the Rock Chair in Composition at The Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. Her music is published exclusively by Lawdon Press.

For more information, please visit:
<http://www.jenniferhigdon.com>

Laura Elise Schwendinger (b. 1962) is a Professor of Composition at the University of Wisconsin Madison and Artistic Director of the Contemporary Ensemble there. She was the first

composer to win the American Academy in Berlin Prize Fellowship, in 2000. Her music has been praised in the nation's major newspapers and performed by many of the leading artists of our day, including Dawn Upshaw, the Arditti Quartet, Janine Jansine, Jennifer Koh, eighth blackbird, Matt Haimovitz, The American Composers Orchestra, and the Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra, among many others; and at venues including Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Center, Wigmore Hall, Théâtre du Châtelet, and The Berlin Philharmonic. Schwendinger's honors include those from the Fromm, Guggenheim, and Rockefeller Foundations; Radcliffe Institute at Harvard University; the American Academy of Arts and Letters; the MacDowell and Yaddo Colonies; and the Bellagio and Liguria Conference Centers in Italy, among others. Other CDs of her music, including her concertos for violin and cello, are being released this season on the

Centaur and Albany labels.

For more information, please visit:
<http://lauraschwendinger.com>

Augusta Read Thomas's (b. 1964) deeply personal music is guided by her particular sense of musical form, rhythm, timbre, and harmony. This individuality is deeply informed by history. In Thomas's words, "Old music deserves new music and new music needs old music." For Thomas, this means cherishing her place within the musical tradition and giving credit to those who have forged the musical paths she follows and from which she innovates. Her works have been commissioned by such institutions as the Chicago, Pittsburgh, London, and Boston Symphony Orchestras and the Orchestre de Paris. Thomas was the Mead Composer-in-Residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra from May 1997 through June 2006, a residency that encompassed nine world premieres, culminating in the premiere of *Astral Canticle*, one of

two finalists for the 2007 Pulitzer Prize in Music.

For more information, please visit:
<http://augustareadthomas.com>

Joan Tower (b. 1938) is widely regarded as one of the most important living American composers. During a career spanning more than fifty years, she has made lasting contributions to musical life in the United States as a composer, performer, conductor, and educator. Her works have been commissioned by major ensembles, soloists, and orchestras, including the Emerson and Tokyo quartets; soloists Evelyn Glennie and John Browning; and the orchestras of Chicago, New York, and Washington DC, among many others. Tower was the first composer chosen for a Ford "Made in America" consortium commission of sixty-five orchestras. The eponymous album collected three Grammy Awards: Best Classical Contemporary Composition, Best Classical Album, and Best Orchestral Performance. In

1990, she became the first woman to win the prestigious Grawemeyer Award for *Silver Ladders*. She has held several residencies with orchestras including a 10-year residency with New York's Orchestra of St. Luke's. Tower is a co-founder of the Da Capo Chamber Players and played piano for the ensemble in addition to writing several of their well-received pieces. She is currently a professor at Bard College, where she has taught since 1972. Her music is published by Associated Music Publishers.

For more information, please visit:
<http://www.schirmer.com>