

Neave Trio brings women composers into foreground for ‘Underground Classical’

Updated Jun 11, 2:21 PM; Posted Jun 10, 2019



The Neave Piano (from left, violinist Anna Williams; pianist Eri Nakamura; and cellist Mikhail Veselov) headline the Underground Classical series June 15.

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By [Zachary Lewis, The Plain Dealer](#)

CLEVELAND, Ohio – Don’t mistake the next Underground Classical event for just another chamber music concert.

About the Boston-based Neave Trio and its plans for the Praxis Fiber Workshop, there’s almost nothing one could call traditional.

In addition to sitting and listening, patrons will be encouraged to chat with the musicians, engage with a visual art project and ponder the historical predominance of male composers. All in the same evening.

“We want to make music available to as many people as possible,” said Mikhail Veselov, the Neave Trio’s cellist. “Having other elements, with music still at the center, truly helps audiences connect to the music. It’s extremely effective.”

No need here to sit in a reverent hush. The Neave Trio, which includes violinist Anna Williams and pianist Eri Nakamura, a graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Music, encourages listeners to

respond naturally and ask questions. Chalk it up to the group's educational mindset; it's on staff at the Longy School of Music in Boston.

There'll be plenty to look at, too. In a move rare for chamber musicians, the Neave Trio has partnered with visual artists Andrew Ringler and Bing Lin to complement their performance with an abstract video, one that responds in real time to the music.

"Our hope is that the visuals reflect and give an extra dimension to the music," Veselov said. "I hope they'll enhance the atmosphere and make it a 4-D experience."

Not that visuals are necessary, of course. Indeed, even without the video element and conversation, the Neave Trio's concert Saturday would still stand apart from the norm, solely on the basis of its program.

That's because it features not the usual array of works by Brahms, Mozart, Dvorak and the like, but rather music by women, most of whom spent their lives and careers in the shadows of their male counterparts.

Rebecca Clarke; Amy Beach; Cecile Chaminade: all penned mature Piano Trios. Only the fourth work on the program, however, a Piano Trio by Jennifer Higdon, could rightly be thought of as well-known.

"Things still aren't balanced at all, and we want to help change that," Veselov said. "Their music wasn't heard or published nearly as much as it should have been, and there's so much great music out there."

Here, in light of this mission, may be the perfect place to address the group's name.

Look up "Neave" among Irish names, and you'll find, first, that it's female, and second, that it means "radiance." (For the Neave Trio, it also refers to a close friend's daughter.) If there's a better name for a group dedicated to sharing the music of women composers, it isn't currently in use.

"We love putting people together with music maybe they haven't heard of," Veselov explained. "We just love performing good music."

PREVIEW

Neave Trio

What: The group performs music by Clarke, Beach, Chaminade and Higdon.

When: 8 p.m. Saturday, June 15.

Where: Praxis Fiber Gallery, 15301 Waterloo Road, Cleveland.

Tickets: Free, with goodwill donations. Go to undergroundclassical.org.