

Sords - Severn - Duvall Trio

by Neville Bowman



The first really snowy day of winter is often when many of us choose to stay home, warm and safe from the chaos of newly slippery roads, especially on a Sunday afternoon. A time to sit, relax, put on some music and let a couple of hours go by, perhaps with a nice wine. How about some Beethoven? Brahms? Maybe even Shostakovich if you're adventurous. On the other hand, why not share the experience live, with 800 friends?

That is exactly what the Kelowna Community Concert Association crowd did, braving the snow and closed roads to hear a wonderful performance by the Sords-Severn-Duvall trio. Consisting of violinist Andrew Sords (Cleveland), Cellist Luke Severn (Melbourne), and Cheryl Duvall (Toronto), the afternoon was filled with music of the aforementioned composers, plus a lovely composition by Luke Severn, which I believe was a North American debut for the piece.

The afternoon started off strongly with an energetic Hungarian dance by Brahms, one of the most cohesive pieces of the concert. Andrew has an easy and humourous way with an audience, which always makes such a difference especially when performing such serious music. Right from the beginning the skills of each musician were apparent, and the dexterity and passion of Andrew and Luke was displayed throughout the remainder of the concert. Andrew Sords' technical skill was particularly evident on Ravel's Tzigane, closing the first half. Previous to that was Luke Severn's original work "...when the world was young", a more contemporary piece and one of my favourites of the day. For such a young composer (he is 26), the piece displayed a maturity and respect of the craft that was unexpected. Cheryl Duvall seemed at times more comfortable with this contemporary style and the two really connected to tell the story. He is definitely a composer worth watching.

The entire concert was acoustic, with the control and balance of sound purely in the hands of the artists, allowing us to hear the trio as it truly sounds. With the KCCA crowd this works (they are a listening crowd), though there were times when certain instruments were a bit quiet (the cello I found got lost often in the first half). The acoustic quirks of KCT may have contributed to that, as well as some minor tuning issues as sometimes musicians can't hear each other properly. But with such a natural sound, the full dynamic range and subtlety of tone could be heard, even the rosin on the bows. It makes for a very personal and intimate sound, even in such a crowd.

Once again, we were privileged to have some young musicians performing before the main show. This time we had Kaela Peever with some classical repertoire leading up to a Conservatory exam and Alissa Delforge singing some more modern works. I think is a great idea, getting younger performers in front of an audience. It's such a valuable experience. Mention must also be made of the page turner, Jessie. It's a very important job and not that easy, especially with all of the Beethoven runs that Cheryl was putting down, so well done!

The Sords-Severn-Duvall trio concert was the last of 2019, but by no means the last for the KCCA season. It was certainly a strong way to lead into 2020, and upcoming acts will not disappoint! In the meantime, look for this trio on their tour, and the individual cds from each artist. All of them are excellent performers and explore diverse fields of music on their own. Thanks to Betty Skilbeck and all the volunteers who make these shows happen! See you next year.