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The Claremont Trio Releases *Queen of Hearts* in Celebration of 20th Anniversary

Featuring Music Commissioned for the Trio by Composers Gabriela Lena Frank, Sean Shepherd, Judd Greenstein, Helen Grime, Nico Muhly, and Kati Agócs



Release Date: February 25, 2022

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Claremont Trio: www.claremonttrio.com

“one of America’s finest young chamber groups” – *The Strad*

New York, NY – The **Claremont Trio** (**Emily Bruskin**, violin; **Julia Bruskin**, cello; and **Andrea Lam**, piano) will release its next album, *Queen of Hearts*, on its Tria Records label on **February 25, 2022** in celebration of its 20th anniversary. On the new album the Claremont presents music written especially for the group over the last fourteen years by six of today’s leading composers – **Gabriela Lena Frank, Sean Shepherd, Judd Greenstein, Helen Grime, Nico Muhly, and Kati Agócs.**

Lauded as “one of America’s finest young chamber groups” (*Strad Magazine*), the Claremont Trio is sought after for its thrillingly virtuosic and richly communicative performances. First Place winners of the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson International Trio Award and the only piano trio ever to win the Young Concert Artists International Auditions, the Claremonts are consistently lauded for their “aesthetic maturity, interpretive depth, and exuberance” (*Palm Beach Daily News*).

“For this album, we bring together works written for us since 2008 by composers of our own generation. It almost feels as if we have grown up with these incredible artists, musically speaking, over these nearly fifteen years,” said Julia Bruskin. “It’s especially poignant to be able to share this music more widely through this recording, of work made by and with friends, during this time of ongoing uncertainty. We are hopeful that the spirit of collaboration and togetherness that made these works possible comes through to listeners.”

Gabriela Lena Frank’s *Four Folk Songs* was written for the Claremont Trio in 2012 and draws inspiration from the composer’s mother’s homeland of Perú. She writes, “As an American-born Latina, so much of my understanding of this small yet culturally

rich Andean nation has been necessarily fashioned from within my private imagination from the time I was a young child. Frequent trips to Perú in my adulthood, always done with my mother, leave me with a sense of belonging to something larger than myself as I connect private musings with the actual existing reality.”

Sean Shepherd’s *Trio* from 2011 is a three-movement piece, written for the first concerts that took place in Calderwood Hall at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, which was designed by Renzo Piano. Shepherd was inspired by the architecture of the space, and describes the middle movement, “Calderwood,” as the emotional core of the work.

A Serious Man by **Judd Greenstein**, from 2013, was dedicated to the composer’s uncle, Bill Carroll. Greenstein describes his uncle as, “one of the funniest people I’ve ever met,” and as bringing, “a seriousness to life that didn’t include taking himself too seriously.” The work was premiered at the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival, not far from Detroit, where Greenstein’s uncle lived.

Helen Grime’s *Three Whistler Miniatures*, composed in 2011, is inspired by three chalk and pastel miniatures displayed in the Veronese Room of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. The evocative movements are named “The Little Note in Yellow and Gold,” “Lapis Lazuli,” and “The Violet Note.” Grime writes, “Throughout the piece the violin and cello form a sort of unit, which is set against the contrasting nature of the piano.”

Nico Muhly describes his piece *Common Ground*, from 2008, as employing three different repetitive techniques. He writes, “The first third of the piece is a cycle of chords of expanding and contracting length, with the violin and cello trading agitated little lines. The second is a pastoral obsession over essentially one chord: light changing over a field. . . [Later,] the piano begins stating a ground bass – a repetitive line around which the harmonies constantly shift. This sort of thing pops up in Purcell, where I first encountered it as a choirboy.”

Kati Agócs’s *Queen of Hearts*, composed in 2017, was commissioned by Chamber Music Northwest for the Claremont Trio. Agócs describes the piece as being about the idea of resilience. She writes, “A life fully lived may see challenges that can seem insurmountable. The work’s variation structure, by representing tenaciousness and ingenuity – continuously finding new ways to respond – ultimately reveals an inner strength and an emotional core that hold steadfast and unshaken no matter how they are tested. The title *Queen of Hearts* is a whimsical reference to the “mother of higher love” card in a deck of playing cards. This card symbolizes resilience, magnetism, nobility, empathy, decorum, a flair for the dramatic, and a distinctly feminine power.”

More about the Claremont Trio:

The Claremont Trio’s recent seasons have included engagements at Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, the Library of Congress, Boston’s Celebrity Series, Chicago’s Dame Myra Hess Series, Pasadena’s Coleman Chamber Music Association, Johns Hopkins University, the Austin Chamber Music Festival, Stanford Lively Arts, Kansas City Friends of Chamber Music, along with the Chamber Music Societies of Phoenix, Dallas, Sedona, San Antonio, Buffalo, and the Universities of Washington, Wisconsin, and Missouri. The Trio has performed the Beethoven Triple Concerto with orchestras such as the Nashville Symphony, Virginia Symphony, Pacific Symphony, and Utah Symphony. The group also appears regularly at festivals including Ravinia, Saratoga, Mostly Mozart, Caramoor, Skaneateles, Rockport, Bard, Norfolk, and Chamber Music Northwest and with guest artists including Anthony McGill, Misha Amory, and Ida Kavafian.

BMOP/sound will release the Claremont Trio’s upcoming recording of Eric Sawyer’s Triple Concerto, and American Modern Recordings released the Claremont Trio’s recent recording of Robert Paterson’s works, including Claremont Trio commission “Moon Trio.” *Gramophone* magazine praised the Trio’s “poetry and... thrilling virtuosity” in the group’s Beethoven “Triple” Concerto disc with the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra, released on Bridge Records. The group’s discography also includes Mendelssohn Trios, Shostakovich and Arensky Trios, and American Trios with works by Leon Kirchner, Ellen Zwilich, Paul Schoenfield, and Mason Bates. A collaborative disc with clarinetist Jonathan Cohler received a Critic’s Choice award from *BBC Magazine*.

In celebration of its 20th anniversary, the Claremont Trio is releasing this album of commissioned trios written for them by Nico Muhly, Kati Agócs, Gabriela Lena Frank, Mason Bates, Sean Shepherd, Judd Greenstein and Helen Grime. In addition, their 21-22 season includes performances for the Friends of Chamber Music in Portland, OR, Pro Musica in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico and the Chamber Music Society of Bethlehem, PA.

The Claremont Trio was formed in 1999 at the Juilliard School. Twin sisters Emily Bruskin and Julia Bruskin grew up in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and they both play antique French instruments. Emily’s violin is a Lupot from 1795; Julia’s cello is a J.B. Vuillaume from 1849. Andrea Lam grew up in Sydney, Australia. The Claremonts are based in New York City near their namesake: Claremont Avenue. For more information about the Claremont Trio, please visit www.claremonttrio.com

Claremont Trio: Queen of Hearts

Emily Bruskin, violin; Julia Bruskin, cello; Andrea Lam, piano

Release Date: February 25, 2022 (Tria Records)

Track List:

[1-4] Gabriela Lena Frank: *Four Folk Songs* (2012)

1. Canto para La María Angola [3:07]

2. Children's Dance [2:07]

3. Serenata [4:56]

4. Chavín de Huantar [4:35]

[5-7] Sean Shepherd: *Trio*

5. Florid Hopscotch [4:43]

6. Calderwood [4:45]

7. Slow waltz of the robots [3:20]

[8] Judd Greenstein: *A Serious Man* (2013) [16:08]

[9-11] Helen Grime: *Three Whistler Miniatures*

9. The Little Note in Yellow and Gold (Tranquillo) [3:10]

10. Lapis Lazuli (Presto) [3:40]

11. The Violet Note (Lontano, molto flessibile) [4:23]

[12] Nico Muhly: *Common Ground* (2008) [9:36]

[13] Kati Agócs: *Queen of Hearts* (2017) [13:29]

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