

THE KALICHSTEIN-LAREDO-ROBINSON TRIO CELEBRATING ITS 40th YEAR!

The 2016-2017 season marks the 40th anniversary of Joseph Kalichstein, Jaime Laredo, and Sharon Robinson performing together as the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio.

It is rare in the music world for an ensemble to go on for so long and rarer still to do so without a change in personnel. What has made the KLR so enduring on the world's concert stages? It is surely in part some ineffable qualities that prompted Donal Henahan, in his 1978 *New York Times* review early in the trio's first full concert season, to write: "In a music capital such as New York there is a ceaseless realigning of talent as musicians flutter about in search of just the right combination of talents, temperaments and tastes. At rare intervals, some fortunate grouping turns out to have all the ingredients in the proper proportions and we see the birth of a Budapest, a Juilliard, a Guarneri, a Beaux Arts. Another of these chancy experiments has resulted in [the] formation of the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio...". And *The Washington Post* in 2014, following their performance that year at the Kennedy Center, to sum up: "Can we just be done with it, and declare the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio the greatest piano trio on the face of the earth...".

Some actual explanations for the KLR's longevity are that their names are linked by more than hyphens: Laredo and Robinson have been happily married to each other for 38 years, having wed on the eve of the birth of the Trio; all three members are lucky to have been blessed with robust health, extraordinary energy, and remarkable stamina; and as personalities, all three are considerate, generous, and intensely loyal. From their earliest read-throughs, even before they announced their formation as a group, they heard what Henahan later heard: that their playing together had a natural, internal balance that produced singularly rich and satisfying sonorities—a sweet spot the three are able to hit in any hall's acoustics. This may be the characteristic that most explains the group's enduring appeal and why they have often been credited with setting the "gold standard" for piano trio performance.

Many commentators over the years have tried to describe the essence of the KLR sound. A writer from Buffalo said in 2014 "...the trio all but breathes together. Their timing is impeccable, their unity is natural." Whether or not any writer or critic has successfully captured the KLR's sound in words, audiences feel it and respond to it.

If the KLR's sound were a recipe, it would start, like every recipe, with raw ingredients, in this case each player's mastery of his or her instrument, as evidenced by an impressive string of individual recognitions—a First Prize in the Queen Elizabeth Competition, a First Prize in the Leventritt Competition, an Avery Fisher Recital Award, a Young Concert Artists Award, a Piatigorsky Memorial Award, a Concert Artist Guild Award. This mastery allows the players complete freedom to

dance, sing, leap, whisper, and appear to be simply conversing with each other in the voices of their separate instruments. This degree of mastery is the hallmark of every great ensemble, but the KLR have it in glorious abundance.

In their years of touring together, the KLR have performed in most of the world's musical capitals and many venues in between, criss-crossing the globe from their bases in the US to Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, Australia and New Zealand, South America, Canada, Europe, and back again. They have appeared in festivals from Aldeburgh and Aspen to Tanglewood and Tivoli. Closer to home, they have enjoyed longstanding relationships with the 92nd St. Y, where they performed regularly, often several times each season, over thirty-five years, and the Kennedy Center, where they remain the resident chamber ensemble.

Their extensive discography encompasses most of the great repertoire for piano trio, some works recorded more than once—the trios of Mendelssohn, Schubert, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Dvorak's "Dumky", and the complete works of Beethoven for Piano Trio, including the Triple Concerto with the English Chamber Orchestra—as well as recordings of Haydn trios and trios of Shostakovich and Ravel. When their 4-CD Beethoven Trios cycle was selected by the *BBC Music Magazine* for a record of the month award, they were hailed as "an Archduke of a Trio."

The KLR have an adventurous musical spirit that has led them to enrich the literature for piano trio with new works. This spirit has in turn made them attractive to some of the 20th Century's--and this century's--most sought after composers. They have inspired piano trios by Leon Kirchner, Stanley Silverman, André Previn, Arvo Pärt, Joan Tower, David del Tredici, Richard Danielpour, Halflidi Hallgrímsson, David Ludwig, and Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, with whom they have enjoyed a special relationship, inspiring her to write other chamber works for the group, including her Triple Concerto. Several of the new piano trios have been recorded in the KLR's CD titled *Legacies* and a number of them have entered the repertoire and are performed regularly by other groups. Their latest release, titled *Passionate Diversions*, is devoted to the music of Ellen Zwilich and includes her Piano Trio, her Bass Quintet, and her Septet for Piano and Strings.

It would be hard to find an aspect of the chamber music world on which the KLR have not left a deep imprint. They have coached ensembles the world over, from Carnegie Hall's Encounters to Miyazaki, Japan, to the Jerusalem Music Center, to the La Jolla Festival. In 2003, the *Kalichstein Laredo Robinson International Piano Trio Award ["KLRITA"]* was established by the Chamber Music Society of Detroit to recognize and encourage younger piano trios at an early stage of their career and give them performance opportunities for a consortium of committed major presenters. To date, the *KLRITA* has helped launch the Claremont Trio, the Trio Con Brio Copenhagen, the Atos Trio, and the Morgenstern Trio.

All three KLR members have long been associated with some of the country's—if not the world's—most prestigious institutions. Robinson taught individual cello students for 7 years at Indiana University. At The Cleveland Institute of Music, where she now teaches cello, Ms. Robinson has established an Advanced Piano Trio Program. Mr. Kalichstein, in addition to teaching a limited number of individual students at The Juilliard School, holds the Edwin and Nancy Marks Chair in Chamber Music there. Mr. Laredo, who, over 5 decades, has taught at The Curtis Institute, Indiana University, and at The Cleveland Institute of Music, has also had a distinguished career as an orchestral conductor, often appearing as conductor-soloist. His work with The New York String Orchestra at Carnegie Hall each December has won particular acclaim. He headed the concert series “Chamber Music at the Y” for over 30 years. Laredo and Robinson are currently Artistic Directors of the Hudson Valley Chamber Music Circle and the Linton Chamber Music Series in Cincinnati. Kalichstein has been the Chamber Music Advisor to the Kennedy Center for almost 20 years as well as Artistic Director of the Fortas concert series there over the same period. In recognition of these and other contributions to the art of chamber music and music education, in 2002 the Trio was named *Musical America's* Chamber Ensemble of the Year.

It would be nearly impossible to single out highlights of the Trio's long and distinguished career. Among them would surely have to be their performances in New York in 1983 of the complete chamber music works for piano and strings of Brahms in collaboration with The Guarneri Quartet, a project that had never been undertaken before, and their U.S. tours with the Emerson and Miami String Quartets. They have collaborated on many occasions with Pinchas Zukerman, Ricardo Morales, David Jolley, and Michael Tree, to name a few. They've had their scary moments, from waiting endless minutes for security clearance to The White House (before their very first performance together) in the unheated guard house in the frigid January of 1977, to boarding an outboard motorboat seating about 8, with Ms. Robinson's cello in tow, to be transported to their concert in the Borromeo Palace on the Isola Bella in Lago Maggiore. And they've had their unforgettable, breathtaking moments—landing in a tiny seaplane at the Great Barrier Reef and arriving in Hong Kong in the midst of Chinese New Year fireworks.

In the early years of their career, the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio were almost never mentioned without the epithet “acclaimed” attached to their name. As the years went by, “acclaimed” gave way to “renowned”, then “legendary”, “revered”, and “venerable”. Lately, they've begun to be called “the beloved Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio”—possibly, if one were to ask them, the way they would most like to be thought of and, ultimately, remembered. For the moment, they're looking ahead to a bright future of musical adventures that includes several all-Beethoven cycles and a new work by Ellen Zwilich to celebrate their 40 luminous years together.