

CLASSICAL

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Gryphon Trio shows how new music, easy listening can co-exist

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CLASSICAL MUSIC CRITIC

One of the greatest pleasures of good music is being able to share it with others. Which is something Toronto's Gryphon Trio knows how to do with panache.

The group made up of violinist Annalee Patipatanakoon, cellist Roman Borys and Jamie Parker on piano is the ensemble-in-residence of Music Toronto, the city's prime source of chamber music programming. As such, they are not only expected to play nicely, but act as ambassadors to as wide an audience as possible.

As they played their season's first Music Toronto program – and marked their 15th year together – at the Jane Mallett Theatre last night, the three musicians, now in their early forties, demonstrated what makes them so special on several different levels.

Most obviously, their playing was first-rate in a program that included two canonical works in the repertoire: Haydn's *Piano Trio No. 32 in A Major*, from 1793, and Mendelssohn's *Piano Trio in D minor*, Op. 49, premiered in 1840.

The players gave each piece its due, approaching the Haydn with a light effervescence that illuminated the limpid textures of classical-era style.

The Mendelssohn was all melodramatic Romantic swings between sweet contemplation and heart-on-sleeve emotion.

This great musicianship extended to two new works, examples of the Gryphons' quest to reach out.

Lunar Reflections, a five-moon suite commissioned from 34-year-old Canadian pianist and composer Heather Schmidt for last summer's Ottawa Chamber Music Festival, showed how new music and easy

listening can co-exist.

Schmidt's writing, by turns atmospheric and exuberant, gives the pianist a lot more work than the string players, a task that Parker made light work of.

Despite his virtuoso workload, Parker never outshone his two partners on stage.

Gryphon March, by Claude Watson School of the Arts student Paula Gil was a short but satisfying product of the Gryphons' 11-year commitment to connect with young people as mentors.

Luckily, CBC Radio Two was there last night, too, helping ensure that an even wider public will share in the pleasure sometime soon.