
MUSIC

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It's all la la la and no da da da for this trio

Montreal's Trio 86 will challenge your classical tastes

by Nicholas Friesen (Arts & Culture Editor)

Montreal's Trio 86 holds two ex-Winnipeggers among its ranks in Jennifer Thiessen (viola) and Marc Wieser (piano). Rounded out by clarinet player Krista Martynes, the new-music-meets-classical outfit is set to deliver a slew of performances all over Winnipeg and Brandon with a program it's calling the Kegelstatt Legacy.

"The very first piece that was written for this combination of instruments was by Mozart, so that's kind of the starting point," says Thiessen over the phone from Montreal. The piece in question is the Kegelstatt Trio, so it's fitting. "We're gonna play that piece and then move into the romantic period and then the 1970s and play this Kourtag piece and conclude the program with the Michael Matthews' piece."

The piece from Groundswell veteran Matthews is still untitled, but was written in January.

Thiessen and Wieser both knew Matthews as the composition professor during their stints at the University of Manitoba, but it wasn't until a chance meeting at last year's Cluster Festival that a creative partnership formed.

"He wasn't directly involved (in the festival) but he was at all the concerts," Thiessen says. "We got to talking and later during the year he approached us about writing a piece for us."



Montreal-based music act Trio 86 will perform a handful of classical and new music concerts in Winnipeg over the next few weeks. by Supplied

In Montreal there's so much great stuff happening here but there's more music happening than there are people to go see it.

— Jennifer Thiessen, musician

Thiessen is no stranger to touring. Her day job is in the musical/dance project La La La Human Steps where she is currently well into a two-year touring contract that included a stop at Winnipeg's recent New Music Festival.

"That was really great to be able to stop at home with my work that usually takes me everywhere but home," she laughs. "In Montreal, Trio 86 has become more a part of my musical life."

Thiessen first moved to Ottawa for school and wound up in Montreal to work on her master's.

"I stayed because there's a great music scene here," she says. "You can live here and make your life in music. That's a pretty rare blessing. For people I know in Winnipeg, for classical musicians, you need a job in the symphony. In other kinds of music, the people I know often have other jobs to pay the rent and work their butts off to play music. I came to Montreal to make music my full time work."

Touring a rock 'n' roll trio across Canada is hard enough, but when you're involved in a classical or new music trio, there's definitely a niche audience.

"It is a niche, which also means there are fewer people aware or interested in it," she says. "With classical you have the chamber music societies and that appeals to a certain group of people."

When it's new music, I think it's even more of a niche. I don't know if it makes booking easier or harder. Talking to friends who are booking their bands around the country it doesn't sound that different.

"In Montreal there's so much great stuff happening here but there's more music happening than there are people to go see it. Trying to make an

artistic venture work on a business level and make ends meet and just trying to make your project take off and be self-sustainable is a lot of work it can be really rewarding.”

See Trio 86 on Tuesday, Feb. 28 at 2 p.m. at Providence College; Thursday, March 1 at 11:30 a.m. at the Canadian Mennonite University; Friday, March 2 at 12:30 p.m. at the University of Manitoba's Eva Clare Hall; or as part of the Cluster New Music and Integrated Arts Festival Friday, March 9 at 8 p.m. at Eckhardt Hall (Winnipeg Art Gallery). Visit <http://www.trio86.com>.

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