

TRIO CAVATINA'S "TASTE OF MUSIC" ACCLAIMED

By Nancy Mullins, reprinted by permission of Star Democrat

The Avalon Theatre was transformed from a French marketplace by day to a venue for a musical finale to The Talbot International Food and Wine Festival by night when the Eastern Shore Chamber Music Festival brought the Trio Cavatina to the stage.

The Trio, composed of Ieva Jokubaviciute on piano, Harumi Rhodes on violin and Priscilla Lee on cello, is relatively new to the chamber music scene, having formed in 2005. But their sophistication and brilliance belie both the youth of the musicians and the time they've played together. Individually, they have become well known at music festivals and competitions worldwide. Together, as Trio Cavatina, they concentrate largely in the romantic and classical musical eras.

Saturday night they performed stunning examples of these: Robert Schumann's *Fantasiestücke* Op. 88, and Ludwig van Beethoven's Piano Trio Op. 70, No. 1 in D Major. Then they departed into a more modern era with two tangos by Astor Piazzolla.

The Schumann piece began with a graceful, gentle Romanze movement, an appropriate introduction to the Trio's ability to read one another, a flawless execution with a light, deft touch. The second movement, the *Humoreske*, was as charming as it sounds, also light and dancelike. The strings were treated to large, dramatic bow movements, and the musicians seemed to be having a dance with their instruments. The audience was delighted and at rapt attention, watching the players' animated movements and amused facial expressions. The third part, the duette, was another dance between the violin and cello, with the piano providing perfect counterpoint and complement. The violin was featured in this return to gentle, rolling tones. Rhodes seemed to caress her violin as if she were trying to send it off to sleep. Many eyes in the audience closed as the piece became like a lullaby. The Finale began with sounds more like "look what else is coming" than the "this is the end" that the name of the movement might imply. Alternating between forte and piano dynamics, the piece went back and forth between the strings and the piano like questions and answers, the answers never what was expected, always a little surprise. The musicians occasionally glanced up at each other as if they were asking "what next?," but never losing the thread or missing a nuance.

The Beethoven piece, subtitled "The Ghost," was another surprise if one thought it was going to be spooky. In fact, it has a startling beginning in the *Allegro* movement [-] perhaps we can picture a ghost coming in and out of windows at night, creat-

ing havoc but not very terrifying. The piece was written by Beethoven after a long hiatus during which he realized the full extent of his hearing loss. It is recognizably Beethoven, but a departure from the composer's commonly recognized melodic progressions; perhaps a reflection of the grief process – mourning, then hopeful. The strings were deep and low while the piano interjected livelier notes. The *Largo* movement was familiar Beethoven, almost reticent, not quite hesitant. Rhodes and Lee seemed to coax the music from the strings, the piano serving to encourage them with a more deliberate attitude. With the *Largo*, the piece moved into a heavier, sleepier sound, although it surprised us again at the end when it ended with a "plink." Last was the *Presto*, which showcased the musicians' sympathies for one another, starting and stopping perfectly together. Several times during the *Presto*, it seemed as if we were heading for the end with a drawn-out ritard and decrescendo. Then, abruptly and without demur or the slightest misstep, off we went into another dance, a charming "gotcha" sprung on us by "The Ghost."

The last two pieces of the evening were the promised tangos by Piazzolla, the renowned 20th-century composer who brought tango into the popular musical lexicon. First was the *Primavera Portena*, "Springtime," which jumped without introduction into a gypsy mood, a bit of a naughty dance, then to a hide-and-seek between strings and piano. The piece is quintessential tango, a come-hither between the instruments, culminating in a "now I've got you; let's dance" and a final "hurrah." The musicians teased the audience with raised eyebrows and the audience loved it.

Primavera was followed by *Verano* – summer – which began with a darker, moodier stride, the tango theme not as obvious until the middle section. This piece was a bit more modern with its cascades of minor chords and its mysterious glissandos from the violin. Brief pauses seemed to say, "wait for it," which were answered by resolutions unpredictably either astounding or gentle. The musicians were happy to oblige with "watch this" expressions on their faces, the merest hints of smiles on their lips. The piece leapt back from the capricious to an emotional ending, and the audience responded with immediate and sustained applause.

The performance by the Trio Cavatina was savory and sweet, a fitting ending to the Food and Wine Festival, and a tribute to the ability of the Eastern Shore Chamber Music Festival to bring the highest caliber of musicians to our gourmet corner of the world.

