

[November 19, 2014, Classical](#)

Remembering The Great War

By [Sarah Young](#) Wed, Nov 19, 2014

Lyric Arts Trio combined an excellent program of music and poems to reflect and remember The Great War in Lawrence this past weekend.

The four-year remembrance of The Great War (World War I) has begun in earnest, and as we reflect upon the political, world-wide implications of that “war to end all wars,” we examine its human cost and the effect on individuals who lived through it, or perhaps, did not live through it. Experiencing the cultural response in art, music, and literature gives us a glimpse into the complex emotional inspiration that the war engendered.

Kansas City’s Lyric Arts Trio has taken on this project of reflection in its concert “Remembering the Great War,” which the ensemble performed on Sunday at the Lawrence Arts Center in Lawrence. Sarah Tannehill Anderson, soprano; Elena Lence Talley, clarinet; and Dan Velicer, piano have put together a fascinating group of compositions that reveal much about how poets and composers responded to the war.

Opening the concert with *Two Nursery Rhymes* by British composer Arthur Bliss, we hear all three performers taking on Bliss’s arrangements of poems by Frances Cornford. “The Ragwort” and “The Dandelion” juxtapose the brightness and beauty of the flowers with darkening grey skies of conflict. “The Dandelion” was especially well performed by Anderson and Talley. The stark clarity of voice and clarinet lends itself well to the effect of this piece. *Two Songs* by Charles Griffes on poems by Fiona Macleod (William Sharp) also showcased the trio’s clarity of tone and easy balance. These seamless, Impressionistic pieces are well suited to Anderson’s high, clear voice and her flexibility of expression as the emotions of the compositions hauntingly rise and fall.

Pianist Dan Velicer then played three of Maurice Ravel’s *Le tombeau de Couperin*, short Baroque-like dance pieces, each written by Ravel as a remembrance of a fallen friend. Velicer’s delicate and expressive touch was especially effective in “Menuet,” which, despite its major key and three-quarter time, was filled with profound sadness.

Clarinetist Elena Talley then deftly presented *Three Pieces for Clarinet Solo* by Stravinsky, a striking contrast to the more lyrically melancholy compositions that came before. Inspired by American Jazz, Stravinsky’s work gives only hints or impressions of that genre.

This concert also offered the world premiere of *Soldier’s Dream*, commissioned by the Lyric Arts Trio of Kansas City composer Robert Pherigo. Using the text of Wilfred Owen’s poem, Pherigo

captured the chaos of battle in the opening measures with discordant crashes of sound in piano and clarinet, then as Owen dreams “kind Jesus fouled the big-gun gears;\And caused a permanent stoppage in all bolts,” the music turned quiet, contemplative, even tender as Anderson caressed the language of Owen’s images. Then the piece revived again the anguish of the poet who awakes from his dream of peace to the reality of war. It is a stunning, terrifying composition that captures the essence of Owen’s work, and it was beautifully performed.

The concert closed with an arrangement for the Trio by Doug Talley of George Butterworth’s setting of “In Flanders’ Fields,” John McCrae’s iconic poem of the war. The chamber ensemble sound of the Lyric Arts Trio is particularly suited to this program, and the group’s dedication to education about the music it presents is so appropriate here, as we all come to grips with the artistic history that The Great War has left us.

REVIEW:

The Lyric Arts Trio

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Sunday, November 16, 2014

Lawrence Arts Center

940 New Hampshire St., Lawrence, KS

For more information, visit <http://lyricartstrio.com/>

Top Photo: Lyric Arts Trio

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Classical and Musical Theatre Contributor

Sarah Young is a freelance writer and performer in opera, theatre, choral and musical theatre. She has been seen locally with Wichita Grand Opera, Kansas City Symphony Chorus, Kansas City Civic Opera, Lawrence Community Theatre, Chestnut Fine Arts Center and in other local venues. She studied voice at the University of Kansas, and has been trained in artist programs at Indiana University, Aspen Opera Theatre and the American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz, Austria.