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### Local trio to moo in Woodstock

By Judith White, The Record

July 27, 2000

**A local trio of well-established classical musicians will talk and bark and moo as they perform a new work they have commissioned for Maverick Concert's annual summer series, "Concerts for Young People."**

**Based on Gertrude Stein's children's book, "The World Is Round," the piece for piano trio with musicians as storytellers is by NYC composer Jeffrey Lependorf.**

The work's premiere will be offered in a free performance by the Eribeth Trio at Maverick Concert Hall I, Woodstock, at 11 a.m. Saturday. The work is intended for children in the 4-8 years old range.

Eribeth includes three women who perform regularly with the Albany Symphony Orchestra and other area ensembles, each maintaining a teaching studio within Rensselaer County.

The musicians consider it mere coincidence that they are focusing on works for children at this time in their lives, when they have among them five children, from infancy through first grade. "My mom put together the children's music series at Maverick a few years ago and asked us to play a new piece for it," recalls the trio's cellist, Erica Pickhardt.

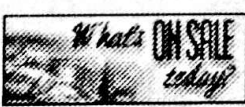
Barbara Pickhardt of Woodstock, mother to Erica and her younger sister, Kristen Tuttman, Eribeth's pianist, is a musician herself and conductor of Hudson Valley's Ars Choralis. Barbara is no longer involved with the Maverick series, but her two daughters' performance there this summer marks the third consecutive year that Eribeth has performed unique story-music for the festival.

Eribeth's chosen musical style for the children's concerts involves the musicians themselves speaking as they play or during rests while others play. "The music itself isn't childish. We're simply playing and telling a story," says Pickhardt, a West Sand Lake resident.

Eribeth has also performed more traditional children's programs, in which music and instruments are introduced in a fun way, "But that's not what this is about," she cautions. "Here we're not trying to teach, but telling a story to music."

The trio's violinist, Elizabeth Silver, of Hoag's Corners, said she thinks of

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the musical style as "concert/story-telling crossover." I know for myself, having children makes this musical experience much more personal, and in a way makes it easier to connect with the audience," she explains. She calls children's responses to the trio's music, "immediate and honest."

It was Silver who suggested Lependorf as composer for this year's piece, because she found he had "a witty and lively element to his work." The two attended Oberlin Conservatory together.

The composer's works have been performed by the Seattle Creative Orchestra and the Cassatt Quartet, among others, and lately he has concentrated on opera, producing three thus far.

Lependorf chose Gertrude Stein's story as narrative for the trio's music. "I've set a lot of music to Stein," he says. "I think of her as my 'patron saint,' and this ('The World Is Round') is a remarkable work, perfectly understandable to children and absolutely delightful."

Stein's tale is of a girl, Rose, who climbs to the top of a mountain to carve her name in a tree, "But it's really about how we figure out who we are," Lependorf says. "This is the Stein work where we get a line, 'A rose is a rose is a rose.' It's about identity."

The composer set Stein's modernist lines rhythmically, creating a sort of "kiddy rap." Each musician's speaking becomes another instrument, so he found himself essentially composing for an ensemble of six instruments, three being the trio's voices.

The treatment allowed him to use techniques such as canons between the rhythm of a spoken line and the instrumental music, and a movement including animal sounds made by both voices and instruments.

Stein was famous for not using a lot of punctuation, so the musical punctuation Lependorf uses in the work involves rests, or changing how fast or slow a line is delivered, or varying its rhythm.

"It was a challenge, since it's hard to know how quickly anyone would speak, but the humor in the lines comes out when they're written like this, with a certain word landing on a certain chord," he says.

Also, in writing for children, he gave himself permission to use a variety of musical styles, from carnival music to "gamelon," an exotic orchestral sound that originated in Java.

Children in the audience will participate as the music-story is told, doing everything from imitating animals to climbing the mountain with Rose. In the finale, the children will sing along, but when Rose sings about who she is, the young audience members will use their own names - since they are who they are.

Eribeth Trio got its start in 1983 when Pickhardt and Silver (then Jones) met at Syracuse University, where both attended the Music of Strings graduate fellowship program.

Tuttman (then Pickhardt) studied business in graduate school and is a CPA, but she never moved far from her family's musical roots, weaving back and forth from piano to ledgers, gradually finding herself focused firmly in the music world.

Silver met Erica's younger sister when the pianist performed with the cellist in various recitals. The three relocated as housemates in the Capital District

after Silver and Pickhardt won spots with ASO in 1985. Tuttman has performed with the orchestra since 1997.

Today the three women rehearse weekly in Tuttman's Troy home, maintaining the schedule they established through the years, "No matter what," Pickhardt says fiercely.


There are moments when the gathering fills a social function as well as musical practice for the three busy friends. "Sometimes frustratingly so," she admits.

For information about Eribeth Trio's upcoming concert and for directions to Maverick Concert Hall, call 845-679-7503.

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