

# Radius Ensemble proves ‘Fresh’ in season finale



DINA RUDICK/GLOBE STAFF/FILE

**Radius Ensemble performed “Nine Rasas” by John Harbison (pictured in 2009).**

**By Jeffrey Gantz** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT MAY 09, 2016

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CAMBRIDGE — The idea behind Radius Ensemble’s “Fresh Paint” 2015-16 season was that each of the four concerts would be anchored by a commissioned new work. For the season finale Saturday at Longy School’s Pickman Hall, the new work was a trio by no less than Pulitzer Prize-winner John Harbison, and though it was on a program with Schubert’s great “Trout” Quintet, it held its own.

The evening started with Lev “Ljova” Zhurbin’s “Lullaby & Memory,” a 2013 composition for flute (Lisa Hennessey), English horn (Jennifer Montbach), bass clarinet (Eran Egozy),

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bassoon (Adrian Morejon), and French horn (Anne Howarth). The seven-minute piece, which Zhurbin describes as “part folk song part tango part hora,” is built on short phrases, as if someone were trying to remember. You could hear the hora, and then a subtle tango, in Radius’s performance; at times Egozy’s bass clarinet seemed to be speaking Yiddish, in memory of Zhurbin’s grandmother-in-law. Rather than reaching a conclusion, the piece fell into sweet sleep.

Harbison’s “Nine Rasas” was, he says, inspired by the Sanskrit concept of nine essences, which his composition describes as “Attraction/Desire,” “Play/Mirth,” “Fury/Obsession,” “Regret/Remorse,” “Terror/Foreboding,” “Disgust/Self Pity,” “Courage/Confidence,” “Wonder/Amazement,” and “Tranquility/Repose.” Running just over 20 minutes, the piece has its three instruments — clarinet (Eran Egozy), viola (Noriko Futagami), and piano (Yukiko Ueno Egozy) — mostly talking back and forth. And the rasas emerged pretty clearly, from Egozy’s clarinet gamboling over the syncopations of his wife’s jazzy piano in “Play/Mirth” to Futagami’s soulful viola in “Regret/Remorse.” Bright piano chords marked the arrival of “Wonder/Amazement,” and then a four-note falling figure gave “Tranquility/Repose” the feeling of a journey’s end.

Contemporary performances of the “Trout,” for violin (Gabriela Diaz), viola (Futagami), cello (Jan Müller-Szeraws), bass (Randall Zigler), and piano (Sarah Bob), tend to be relaxed and genial. Not this one, which took Schubert’s bracing tempo indications to heart. The opening Allegro vivace set tart but caressing strings against Bob’s forthright piano; the Andante went at a real walking clip; the Scherzo was explosive with a playful Trio. The Andantino fourth movement, a set of variations on Schubert’s song “Die Forelle” (“The Trout”), actually sang, and the last variation, a jaunty dance tune, kicked up its heels. Bob led the way throughout, crisp but also alert to nuance. The entire performance, full of thoughtful detail, sounded as fresh as if Radius had just commissioned it.

## **HARBISON TRIO**

Performed by Radius Ensemble. At Longy School of Music of Bard College, Pickman Hall, May 7

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