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André Previn and more: A celebratory afternoon at Linton Music

By Janelle Gelfand
November 6, 2014



Cincinnati has an impressive tradition of chamber music. For 36 years, the [Linton Music Series](#) has added to the landscape with rewarding “music making among friends.” On Sunday, a packed house was on hand in the beautiful First Unitarian Church in Avondale to hear the local premiere of André Previn’s Piano Trio No. 2, as well as Dvorak’s Piano Trio in G Minor. Schumann’s gorgeous Piano Quintet in E-flat Major concluded the program.

The performers included the celebrated Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio, of which violinist Jaime Laredo and cellist Sharon Robinson (who are married) are the artistic directors of the series. But also in the house were founding artistic director Dick Waller, who was celebrating his 85th birthday, and Louis Langrée, music director of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra.

No doubt Langrée was there — at least partly — for a preview of Previn’s music. The composer, a longtime friend of Laredo and Robinson, wrote his Trio for them, as well as a new Double Concerto, [to have its world premiere in two weeks with the CSO](#) in Music Hall.

Previn is noted as a sensational jazz pianist, as well as a Hollywood film composer, conductor and composer of serious music. His Piano Trio No. 2 was sheer joy. The first movement was alternately songful and edgy, with an intensity that reminded one of Shostakovich (as pianist Joseph Kalichstein noted in his comments to introduce the work). Previn really knows how to write a tune, and the slow movement, which opened with a

stunning, deeply interior theme for the cello, was an example of that gift. I loved how the violin and cello traded themes against deep and sometimes pungent chords in the piano. Kalichstein's touch was like a warm cushion.

The finale, marked "Fast," was witty, light and jazzy. At one point, it flowed into a melody of absolute charm. The trio gave it a warm and joyous reading.

You could only revel in their Dvorak Piano Trio, which was played with affection and ease. Dvorak's irresistible folk themes tumbled out, one after another. The trio communicated in an engaging dialogue and captured the nostalgic atmosphere that makes Dvorak so distinctive. The KLR is surely the finest piano trio performing today.

Nothing prepared me for the red-blooded sound that Kalichstein got from the concert grand Steinway in Schumann's Piano Quintet, when the players returned. Tim Lees, CSO concertmaster, and the excellent violist Steven Tenebom joined the trio.

This was a bravura, exuberant performance. The piano part is so demanding, it's rather like playing a piano concerto. Kalichstein propelled his colleagues with a combination of camaraderie and virtuosity. The big, romantic sound that Robinson achieved on her cello was an asset, and the two violinists were well-matched as they traded themes back and forth.

There were many highlights— such as the ethereal beauty of the slow movement's trio, the lightning-quick scherzo and the exciting double fugue in the finale. It was all played with integrity, pinpoint ensemble and unparalleled artistry.