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## Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio Triumphs in Return Engagement

by [Lyn Bronson](#)

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Chamber Music Monterey Bay continued its 2016-2017 season last night at Sunset Center with a return visit by the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio. This year Pianist Joseph Kalichstein, violinist Jaime Laredo and cellist Sharon Robinson are celebrating the 40th anniversary of joining to become a trio, and during their long career they have established themselves as *the* world's premiere piano trio. In welcoming the audience at the beginning of the concert Executive Director Douglas Ambort reminded us that there was another significant milestone, for CMMB this year is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

And I am happy to report that the three performers were at the top of their form on this occasion. The concert kicked off with a twelve-minute new work by Ellen Zwilich,

composed for the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio to commemorate its 40th anniversary and co-commissioned by Chamber Music Monterey Bay. The new work, *Pas de Trois*, taking its title from a French term referring to a dance in a ballet between three people, metaphorically suggests that the three members of the trio while performing the work engage in a symbolic and abstract dance as they play off and compliment each other. It worked. Effectively written for the three instruments, the first movement explored various dance rhythms that leaned toward the jazzy, and for a few moments I thought it might even morph into a tango. The lovely slow movement gave each member of the trio opportunities to charm us with song-like melodies followed by a richly satisfying finale.

The Shostakovich Piano Trio No. 2 in E Minor, written in 1944, reflects the turning of the tide as Russian troops after the 1943 Battle of Kursk enjoyed a strategic initiative for the remainder of World War II on the Eastern Front. Once heard, one can never forget the eerie and ghostly high harmonics shared by cello and violin over ponderous quiet chords in the piano that begin the first movement. We didn't have to wait too long to hear one of Shostakovich's signature keyboard styles — fast moving unison melodies spaced two octaves apart—developing into a delicious fugue for the three instruments. The Scherzo second movement was lively and intense, with Kalichstein deftly taking us all over the keyboard playing up a storm, while melding so skillfully with Laredo and Robinson, that the balance and clarity never for a moment suffered. The Largo third movement featured Kalichstein mesmerizing us with his opening chords in the base (it reminded us of Chopin's Prelude in C Minor, Op. 28, No. 20) that sounded like a measured, labored funeral dirge. The final movement took us on a powerful journey — tortured and painful, yet optimistic for a better future.

The concert ended with the glorious Brahms Piano Trio in B Major, Op. 8, and this was the most satisfying part of the evening's performance. It was in this work that we heard each of the three musicians at their absolute best — each having moments of high drama, charm and authoritative instrumental mastery where the perfect blending allowed the whole work to become greater than the sum of its parts. In great ensemble playing the art of each musician listening intently and always knowing whether to be foreground, background or an equal partner is a much coveted skill. This skill was much evident in this performance. It doesn't get much better than this. There are great moments in this Trio and KLR nailed them all.

Bravos and a standing ovation called the musicians back to the stage for one encore — a lovely arrangement, written for them, of "Summer Time" by Gershwin. What a great way to end a magnificent concert.

End

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