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Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio shows mastery in Mixon Hall series concert

By Donald Rosenberg, October 18, 2012

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Most of the artists who appear in the Mixon Hall Masters Series at the Cleveland Institute of Music are distinguished guests from out of town. With the recent arrival to the CIM faculty of violinist Jaime Laredo and cellist Sharon Robinson, the series hasn't had to look far.

To open the new season Wednesday, these highly respected (and married) figures in the world of classical music shared the stage with pianist Joseph Kalichstein, their colleague in the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio for 35 years. **The performances reflected the depth and telepathic sense of communication the trio has cultivated.**

Two of the works were beloved scores of the chamber-music repertoire, Beethoven's Trio in G major, Op. 1, No. 2, and Brahms' Trio in B major, op. 8. Between these pieces, the trio offered Andre Previn's Trio No. 2, a 2011 commission for the ensemble.

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The Beethoven, one of his earliest published works, is a prime example of the composer's skill at melding eloquence with structural cohesion. **In the hands of the musicians Wednesday, the music sounded fresh and poetic, with Kalichstein bringing special sparkle to the taxing piano part.**

Balances are often a challenge in the combination of piano, violin and cello, but hearing string lines in context was no problem, even when Kalichstein was savoring the keyboard flourishes.

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The ensemble relished the delicious blend of rhapsodic lyricism and cheeky personality in the Previn trio. In three movements, the composer turns back the musical clock, embracing quasi-Brahmsian vibrancy, even as he sprinkles spicy modern flavors into the stew.

Each player has a chance to step into the solo spotlight amid ensemble sighs and frolicsome interactions. The musicians gave generous voice to Previn's alluring statements, and they zipped through the quicksilver finale with dashing virtuosity.

No such overt showmanship, but ample drama, is required in **the Brahms trio, which benefited mightily from Laredo's scrupulous definition, Robinson's warmth and Kalichstein's mix of intimacy and grandeur.**

The Scherzo, with one of Brahms' most glorious trio sections, led without pause to the yearning slow movement, which the ensemble molded to impassioned and tender effect. **The work's expansive journey from major to minor was epitomized in the musicians' thrilling treatment of the furious finale.**

As if these illuminating performances weren't enough, the trio breathed poignant life into Andy Stein's arrangement of Gershwin's "Summertime" as an encore. Now that these Mixon Hall masters have introduced themselves, let's hope they return soon for more chamber-music exhilaration.