

# The Boston Musical Intelligencer

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Mendelssohn, Shostakovich with Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio, then Mahler with Tanglewood Orchestra by Eli Newberger

***“This was chamber music at its exalted best, giving satisfactions both emotional and intellectual...”***

On July 15, 2010, in Ozawa Hall at Tanglewood, the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio offered deeply affecting accounts of the Haydn *Piano Trio No. 25 in E minor*, Hob. XV:12, the Shostakovich *Piano Trio No. 2 in E minor*, Op.67, and the Mendelssohn *Piano Trio No. 2 in C minor*, Op. 66...

**In the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson concert, there was an atmosphere of exquisite gentility.** Individually and together, they approached their instruments with a delicacy, never with overtly passionate expressions of physical engagement with the music. But beneath the surface, with one’s eyes closed, **one could not but discern a ferocious commitment to every note of the music**, and a nearly telepathic reading of the others’ feelings. The surface sheen was smooth and unruffled, but the experience of listening was both profound and revelatory.

The Haydn was played with a kind of respiratory organicity. **The music breathed, and unfolded with a wonderful logic...** The end of the movement was particularly lovely, with an emotionally settling and fulfilling harmonic descent to C 7<sup>th</sup>, B 7<sup>th</sup> and E minor cadences. Kalichstein, using light accents, gave brilliant emphasis to the expressive dynamics of his colleagues.

The second and third movements were equally interesting in harmonic richness and interweaving melodies. **This was Haydn at his most masterful, played by virtuosos at the top of their forms.** The scampering piano lines of the *Rondo Presto*, with warm cello countermelodies, and the tempered, ever-engaged expressivity of Laredo’s violin opened and closed phrases with fulsome and satisfying intelligence. Flowing, rapid piano runs, doubled in the violin, toward the end of the third movement, were superbly well coordinated down to the last *fermata*, before ending in a delicious decrescendo. **Never had Haydn seemed so percipient and confident, and it could not have happened without such visionary ensemble playing.**

The Shostakovich began with Robinson’s devastatingly sad high cello harmonics, giving way to a plaintive violin line in the middle range, muted, and descending downward, with the piano, to a low G. The whole range of an unfolding tragedy was forecast in this introduction...

Many colors, many textures, came quickly, building in volume and intensity and, at the same time, the tempo pulling back as rising lines gave way to dissonant descents. Then folksy, dense, but straightforward melodies, arched over Bartokian scrapings and pizzicatos in the violin and cello. Over the pizzicato strings, **Kalichstein sketched thoughtful wisps of legato melodies and chordal phrases** before the emergence of a brief, hard, emphatic waltz, and a final return to 4/4 meter and a broadly bowed E minor chord. **This was beautiful playing of a rapidly unfolding story of struggle and defeated hope.**

This was serious, the stuff of oppression and suffering.

**Brilliant, confusing, emotionally layered music, that felt the more devastating because of the trio’s astounding restraint.** They knew this music and clearly felt no need to declaim its ineluctable progression toward annihilation.

The story, so elegantly, yet forcefully, expressed, drew to its inexorable close with harmonies voiced in the cello over low piano figures... The horror gave way in the end to a philosophical awareness of life's immutable meaning, and after sustained applause, the intermission began with an unusual quieting of the crowd.

Out on the Ozawa Hall *loggia*, near the stage door, Yo-Yo Ma, Joseph Silverstein, and Emmanuel Ax, as formidable a piano trio as one can imagine in a concert audience, were conversing intensely with their friends. This memorable Tanglewood scene speaks for itself.

Concluding the concert, **the second Mendelssohn Piano Trio was brought out with zest and excitement.** Virtuoso piano runs with string accents were voiced with stunning dynamic variations, giving nuanced emphasis to the quick harmonic transitions from major to minor and back. **Laredo's and Robinson's sublimely expressive playing evinced personal involvement with every one of Mendelssohn's melodic experiments, and Kalichstein's technical virtuosity, in one particularly stunning rapid descending line, was magnificently calibrated not to overweigh his colleagues.**

**Kalichstein's musicality, continuous adjusting his dynamics to fit the ensemble, graced the third movement with liquid right hand lines, swirling phrases, and astounding, sudden shifts in volume.** Pizzicato strings accompanied the finale of this little piano concerto.

The extent to which this trio tells Mendelssohn's own story may be a matter for conjecture, but this intensely sympathetic reading yielded inescapably to a sense of deep personal meaning, both to the composer and to the players. **This was chamber music at its exalted best, giving satisfactions both emotional and intellectual,** notwithstanding the disturbing themes and countercurrents.

*To view the full article, visit <http://classical-scene.com/2010/07/22/mendelssohn-shostakovich/>*