

Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio, Miami String Quartet deliver deft, glorious performance By KEN KEATON

The Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio, with the Miami String Quartet, performed Sunday at the Kravis Center, and the audience enjoyed some truly rare music making.

K-L-R – as pianist Joseph Kalichstein, violinist Jaime Laredo and cellist Sharon Robinson are invariably called – is one of the greatest chamber groups in the world and has been so recognized since the mid-1970s.

The Miami String Quartet – Ivan Chan, violin; Yu Jin, viola; Cathy Meng Robinson, violin; and Keith Robinson, cello – has been one of the nation's finest quartets for more than two decades. This is, by the way, a surfeit of Robinsons. Sharon and Keith Robinson are brother and sister; Cathy Meng and Keith are married.

The concert opened with Luigi Boccherini's Quintet in E, with Sharon Robinson as the extra 'cellist. **The performance was flawless – elegant, graceful, balanced – but the work was forgettable.**

The reason for this odd pairing of ensembles was the next work: Ellen Taaffe Zwillich's Septet. Zwillich is one of our finest living composers, and she dedicated this work to these ensembles.

Zwillich's style is immediately identifiable. Her music is bold, passionate, intense. She is fascinated with sound, as are these musicians, and they produce some of the most beautiful and moving combinations of sound this reviewer has heard.

The opening, Introductions, quotes earlier works for each ensemble, then gradually integrates them all into a whole. Frankly, it is never fully clear whether the work is for piano trio and string quartet or for a septet for piano and strings – every time the two ensembles start to work separately, she finds a way to integrate them in endlessly variable combinations. The heart of the piece is in the second movement, Quasi una Passacaglia. This was profoundly moving music; dark, suffering sounds, full of longing and pain – yet so very beautiful. It brought to mind Dmitri Shostakovich's deepest pages, if without his utter hopelessness. Games, in the spot for the scherzo, recalled the literal meaning of the term: joke. The concluding movement, Au revoir,



Photo by Fred Collins

The Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio, above, along with the Miami String Quartet, dazzled Sunday at the Kravis.

was to convey the sense that the two groups were departing, not forever, but only for a time. Yet this parting was deeply sad, full of nostalgic recollections of their shared experiences, as earlier moments were quoted or alluded to.

Zwillich's Septet is a powerful, moving work, surely destined to become a part of the canon. Had the concert ended here, it would have been sufficient to stay in the memory forever. There would have been no need for one of the greatest performances of the Dvorák Quintet, Opus 81, this reviewer has ever heard.

Despite the seniority of both ensembles, this was a **youthful performance**. Tempos were brisk, with an air of joyousness. Yet when the music needed to breathe, ample space was given. The complex architecture of the second movement, the heart of the piece, was deftly and convincingly handled, **the climaxes were shattering, and the pure sound of each player, and of the combined ensembles, was utterly glorious.**

The real test, however, comes in the scherzo – tempo and pacing are essential, and the second half of the trio must not be rushed, though most groups do so.

Sunday was perfect. The ensemble consisted of the K-L-R trio augmented by the non-Robinsons of the Miami Quartet, and though the scherzo itself was brisk (though not too much), **the trio was utterly and purely magical**. And the finale, usually rushed, was held back, and was absolutely satisfying.

Music making at this level is rare. We should be thankful to experience it when we have the chance.