

## Review: ChamberFest Cleveland: Mélange à Trois

by Daniel Hautzinger



ChamberFest Cleveland is doing it right. With ten concerts over eleven days blends thoughtful programming, diverse venues, exceptional musicians, and a convivial vibe for a musical experience as refreshing and sweet as the ice cream that's

served after some of the concerts. It's an ideal model for the future of classical music.

On June 20 at Harkness Chapel, all of these attributes mixed beautifully in a “Mélange à Trois” (the twee but clever program titles are just another aspect of ChamberFest’s affability). The program linked trio pieces spanning a 270-year period, with each consecutive work more than a century distant from its neighbors. Yet the music evinced stronger connections than are often found in a standard concert. Three of the four pieces featured Eastern European accents (be they Gypsy, Hungarian, or Jewish), and each had a rambunctious wildness fearlessly channeled by the musicians.

Violinist Amy Schwartz Moretti, cellist Gabriel Cabezas, and pianist Orion Weiss began the night in the classical era with Haydn’s *Trio No. 39 in G* from 1795. The “Gypsy Rondo” Finale blazed by like a reckless dervish, the musicians tearing through their parts with irresistible verve. Moretti literally threw her body into accents, standing slightly with each fiery attack.

Kodály’s *Serenade* for two violins and viola from 1920 was a natural companion to the Haydn, as it is heavily influenced by the Hungarian folk music that Kodály spent much of his life collecting and transcribing with Bartók. Kodály’s music is much closer to true Hungarian melodies than Haydn’s is to gypsy tradition, but both composers transmute their material into lively, inventive gems.

Yura Lee anchored the piece, her viola tone as thick and complex as a cello’s. Her astonishing sound was showcased in her second movement duet with first violinist Diana Cohen, the vast gulf between Cohen’s flute-like trebles and Lee’s passionate bass filled in

by second violinist David Bowlin's shivering tremolos. The dialogue was intimate enough to make the listener feel voyeuristic, as if intruding on something personal and sacred.

The only departure from Eastern European folk influences came in Jan Dismas Zelenka's *Trio Sonata No. 5 in F* for two oboes, bassoon and continuo, a representative of the Baroque era from 1720-21. Instead, it related to the program in its uninhibited good nature and crazed quality. Bassoonist Fernando Traba inspired awe with frenetic flurries of notes that didn't seem to leave room for a breath. Oboists Alex Klein and Xiomara Mass keened in the second movement, and harpsichordist Carolyn Warner and cellist Julie Albers grounded the ensemble beneath the difficult syncopations of the third movement.

Folk flavoring made a raucous return in Paul Schoenfield's *Trio for Violin, Clarinet, and Piano* from 1990-91, performed by Diana Cohen, clarinetist Franklin Cohen, and pianist Roman Rabinovich. Chassidic melodies stridently romped among piano glissandos and rude clarinet squawks in boorish revelry. As was now to be expected, the musicians delighted in their unbuttoned performance, rejoicing in the genial success of this ChamberFest concert.

*Published on ClevelandClassical.com June 24, 2014.*

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