

ChamberFest Cleveland - “Youth” (June 25)

by Samantha Spaccasi



Dunham Tavern Museum is a perfect venue for an afternoon of chamber music. On Sunday afternoon, June 25, the seventh installment of this year’s ChamberFest explored the theme of “Youth” and featured early works by Beethoven and Bartók.

The concert began with Wilhelm Popp’s *Rigoletto Variations*, performed by flutist Demarre McGill and pianist Zoltán Fejérvári. McGill gave a nuanced performance of this flashy piece, bringing it to light with impeccable phrasing. His round tone was otherworldly, even in the highest register. He never sounded like he was struggling for

breath, making each note as rich as possible. The flutist seemed to be enjoying himself — he nearly danced around the stage while playing. He and Fejérvári were a winning combination. The pianist kept a steady pace and gently supported his colleague. He played the more elaborate lines brightly and with great artistry.

The Popp was followed by a robust interpretation of Beethoven’s *Piano Trio in G*. Some pianists have a tendency to play this piece too delicately — this was not the case for Roman Rabinovich, who provided the necessary depth to the work. Playing with grace and refinement, the pianist switched moods with ease. Violinist Itamar Zorman and cellist Oliver Herbert blended well with their colleague. Herbert’s tone was especially deep, adding drama. Zorman’s task was daunting — the at times unforgiving acoustics left the violinist exposed, but he rose to the challenge, playing the trickier passages with clear articulation and style. This was an enjoyable performance.

Zorman and Herbert returned to the stage, accompanied by Fejérvári, second violinist Eva Aronian, and violist Yura Lee for Bartók’s *Piano Quintet*, the highlight of the

afternoon. The piece is one of the Hungarian composer's most fascinating works, dotted with pregnant pauses, its mood ranging from ferocious to creepy to dreamy. Fejérvári performed the hazy and disorienting piano part with great phrasing. The dynamic Lee, playing with great tone color and blend, gave a standout performance. Both violinists played with clarity and emotion, communicating well. Towards the end, Zorman seemed as if he was about to fly out of his chair.

These works required a great deal of energy from the performers, who met and exceeded those demands — a strong close to the first week of ChamberFest.

Published on ClevelandClassical.com June 27, 2017.

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