

ENCORE: A Tasteful showcase— Tales of Travel & Transformation

by Jacob Strauss



ENCORE Chamber Music held a musical tasting on Sunday afternoon, July 3rd at the Dodero Center for the Performing Arts. “Tales of Travel and Transformation” featured members of the Verona Quartet, artistic director Jinjoo Cho, and other faculty of the summer institute.

Cellist Max Geissler led off with composer-in-residence Andrew

Rindfleisch’s *Quiet Music for Solo Violoncello*. Gymnastic hand positions land on natural harmonics in “Waltz Music.” Heavy rhythmic lines roll under chords played assertively by Geissler in “Fast Music,” then become quiet while wind chimes glisten in “Slow Music.” The dry acoustic of the hall rendered Geissler’s muted cello nearly inaudible. The cello respired with a nasal timbre, as opposed to its usual sonority. It gave the impression of traveling lightly, absconding quietly into the solitude one can find in green places to suppress hot anxieties.

Oswaldo Golijov’s *Tenebrae* is a melancholic travelog, attempting to contextualize violence from the perspective of a boy who, for the first time, sees an image of the planet on which he lives within the dark expanse of outer space. The quartet — violinists Steve Miahky and Sibbi Bernhardsson, violist Eric Wong, and Geissler — gave the composition swell and sweep. Inner voices oscillate on the mechanism of time while the violins sing sadly, hopefully. The cello accompanies their sadness like a father echoing the pain, while giving it perspective and soul.

Schubert’s expansive *Piano Trio No. 2* concluded the first half. Violinist Jinjoo Cho led the way through the Allegro with drama and elegance, capturing Schubert’s vigor and

relentlessness. In the Andante con moto, cellist Jonathan Dormand performed the famous melody with a beautiful longing and perseverance, and pianist Christina Dahl echoed the quintessentially Romantic motif with a clear-eyed response, a validation of feeling. The ensemble played the courtly Scherzo with lightness and joviality, and concluded the Allegro moderato with a triumphant flourish.

After the intermission, the Verona Quartet, with Sibbi Bernhardsson subbing in for Dorothy Ro on second violin, and joined by ENCORE Fellows violist Joe Burke and cellist David Dietz, offered a grand tour during Tchaikovsky's string sextet, *Souvenir de Florence*. The Allegro con spirito sets the scene of the beautiful Florentine hills and mountains, and follows some folks traveling down a country road. The ensemble serenades the audience in the Adagio cantabile e con moto, the middle voices strumming their instruments while violinist Jonathan Ong and Dormand delighted in the Romantic swell. The violists, led by Abigail Rojansky, galloped in the Allegro moderato, while the history and tradition of the city are explained through the textures and motifs in the ensemble. The piece ends with the Allegro vivace, a party under the lights, men and women, boys and girls, chasing after each other.

This program was a perfect vehicle for the teachers to show their students the breadth of the chamber repertoire, introduce them to new works, and give them a new appreciation for the classics.

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