

Arts @ Holy Trinity: Miguel Espinoza Fusion (Oct. 8)

by Kevin McLaughlin



Imagine a small band of musicians, each skilled but of dissimilar traditions, combining their talents for a banquet of world styles — Celtic, flamenco, Brazilian, and French — and you have an idea of the artistry of Miguel Espinoza Fusion. Presented at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Akron on Sunday, October 8, this was

the inaugural concert of Arts @ Holy Trinity’s 40th season.

Based in Denver, the group made good on its motto, “Music connects, no matter the language of origin.” Leader Miguel Espinoza, of Irish-Scottish and Spanish-Chicano parents, contributed Latin-inflected compositions and flamenco guitar virtuosity. Dianne Betkowski, new to the ensemble after years of playing cello in classical orchestras, contributed solid technique and improvisational courage, though her amplifier could have been turned up a little higher. Randy Hoepker, a recent escapee from public school teaching, delivered polished electric bass lines, and David Hinojosa, guest drum-whisperer, supported and energized the ensemble with astonishingly inventive beats, sometimes using his own chair as his instrument.

The program included flamenco guitar showpieces, a Turkish dance by Hinojosa in 9/8 and 7/8 time, a haunting Celtic “rune” (the word denoting Irish symbolic writing), a cover of Satie’s *Gnossienne No. 1*, and several Espinoza originals which delighted the senses in their variety and piquancy.

The contrast of timbres and traditions made the music sound consistently fresh, but the real power came from the “fusion” of individual perspectives to create something new and delicious.

Published on ClevelandClassical.com October 12, 2023.

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