

Wednesday, March 14, 2018

## Networking magic helps save joint Ensemble Music Society/IVCI concert at Landmarks Center

Last weekend's wintry weather on the East Coast took an unexpected toll when pianist Joseph Kalichstein fell on ice in New York and suffered a broken arm.

This forced some quick action on the part of the two venerable musical organizations behind the highly anticipated **Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio** Tuesday night at the **Indiana Landmarks Center**.

Fortunately, a married couple with **International Violin Competition of Indianapolis** connections was available to fill the date along with the married couple that constitutes two-thirds of the scheduled trio.



2002 IVCI bronze medalist Soovin Kim and pianist Gloria Chien were brought into play with violinist/violist Jaime Laredo, president of the IVCI jury, and cellist Sharon Robinson as collaborators on a new program in the IVCI's Laureate Series. The concert, dedicated to the late IVCI patron Andrew Paine, was co-presented with **Ensemble Music Society**,

Music involving all four musicians opened and closed the program, both featuring Laredo on viola, his secondary instrument. In Mozart's Piano Quartet No. 2 in E-flat, K.

493, it was immediately evident that the concert's replacement pianist was much more than a desperate substitute for Kalichstein. Chien characterized the first movement beautifully, controlling pace and tone in a way that solidified the ensemble; a move into the minor mode was expertly judged, with a slight slowing and dynamic variety signaling a shift in direction.

The performance continued to be well-knit throughout: the pauses in the progress of the *Larghetto* were well-matched, and the slow tempo handled with no slackening of interest or forward motion. Chien also set forth the brilliance of the finale in a spirited performance with touches of humor, such as the brief grace-noted exchanges with Kim.

The concert concluded with a piece of French romanticism in full flower. The essence of Gabriel Fauré's small-scale but cogent intensity came through in the Scherzo of his Piano Quartet No. 1 in C minor, op. 15. Plucked strings accompanied the piano in the elfin main theme, and the quartet captured well the subtle shift in the Trio section, with the strings muted. In the course of the performance, there were phrases for the viola performed in a way indicating Laredo is not a full-time violist. On the whole, this was a well-integrated, glowing account of the work.

A four-movement duo, with Laredo on his primary instrument, gave the star couple in the program a showcase. The quirky modernist Erwin Schulhoff, whose promise as a composer was snuffed out in 1942 in a Nazi death camp, got a rare outing in Indianapolis. The violin-cello duo presented a composer attracted to middle European folk music, especially its dance rhythms, and also under the influence of Debussy's outreach beyond conventional phrasing and harmony. Passages in harmonics set up an ethereal feeling that made the first movement's peaceful ending logical. The embrace of gypsy music in *Zingaresa: Allegro giocoso* was rousing, and the contrasts in the finale, with motoric and songlike episodes negotiated smoothly, displayed an undimmed elan.

As a specific tribute to Paine, a banker long associated with the violin competition, Robinson and Chien played Fauré's enduring Elegie, op. 24. Robinson's large tone was nicely controlled, and the passionate weight of the middle portion was molded with a good feeling for balance by both players. The cellist's bow speed on the last note slowed expertly to allow the tender, elegiac conclusion of the piece to ring out and make the memorial dedication special.

- Jay Harvey Upstage

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