

ZUILL BAILEY

CELLO

Performing in the 10th Anniversary season of the Perlman/Schmidt/Bailey Trio

THE LINCOLN JOURNAL STAR

Review: Trio shines at Lied

BY JOHN CUTLER

Saturday, Oct 18, 2008

Ten years ago, pianist Navah Perlman and two young string players presented one of the group's first concerts at the Lied Center for Performing Arts

On Friday night, Perlman was back for the third time, this time in the Lied's Johnny Carson Theater, with cellist Zuill Bailey and violinist Giora Schmidt.

Two old favorites were up for show, the Beethoven "Piano Trio no. 6 in E-flat Major," from opus 70, and Mendelssohn's famed "Piano Trio no. 1" in d minor.

The night's benchmarks would be to see how much these young folks have matured and if they could hold the pace through Mendelssohn's last movement, which is a whale of a challenge.

Beethoven moves the melody around a lot in the first movement, requiring a constant awareness of what's next. No problem here, the slow and fast phrases were under steady control from all three.

The communication effort was great. Schmidt and Bailey held eye contact and more going in the second movement. In fact, these two seemed to have some kind of visual private conversation going on all night. It was fun to watch.

The final movement flew by at lightning speed. Forceful passages of eighth and 16th notes were extremely precise. The Beethoven work had come off with moxie, packaged extremely well in the group's perfect execution.

The 225 patrons were extremely pleased, indicating their surprise at the maturity of the group in intermission conversations. But Mendelssohn loomed ahead, a work more complex and technically challenging than the lovely Beethoven frolic.

No problem for these three. The same unity that had taken place before intermission marked the Mendelssohn trio. When it came to the last movement, the intensity was at its strongest point all night.

The three young superstars brought the techniques of their playing to highest levels in creating a Mendelssohn masterpiece. The crowd stood and cheered.

"This is a special place for us," Schmidt told the house. "The trio did its first residency here at the Lied 10 years ago, and that strong base says a lot about the fact the trio still exists."

Schmidt unveiled the trio's first CD at Friday's concert, with works by Schubert and Shostakovich.

"And we wanted to bring you something personal, something we haven't played before audiences, until tonight."

With that, the musicians played three transcriptions, starting with Schubert's "Moments Musicaux" and ending with an exquisite arrangement of the traditional "Londonderry Air."

It was like being in the Perlman family parlor, hearing music the family liked to play. Patrons told me after the concert of their deep enjoyment in hearing the intimate transcriptions.

This trio was a great group when they started. Friday's concert proved they have achieved a niche among the premier chamber groups in the new century.

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