

Afternoon tea and the Perlman-Schmidt-Bailey Trio

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The latest installment of Chamber Music in Historic Places, UCSB Arts & Lectures' imaginative series, began with tea on the center lawn of the Four Seasons Biltmore. But the sweet treats were completely overshadowed by the performance that followed in the ballroom by the Perlman-Schmidt-Bailey Trio.

This is an outstanding ensemble of young thoroughbreds who play to the highest standards. Pianist Navah Perlman is Itzhak Perlman's daughter. Cellist Zuill Bailey, a Music Academy alumnus and Santa Barbara

music review

favorite, plays a 1693 cello long used in the Budapest Quartet. Violinist Giora Schmidt, newest and youngest

member of the group, is a student of Itzhak Perlman at Juilliard. All devote much of their time to active solo careers, but the ongoing trio is close to their hearts.

Music-lovers delight in the trio. These three instruments can make an almost orchestral range of expressive sound. It's a small enough group that you can hear each player clearly. The big Biltmore ballroom was similar in size to those most of the music was written for, and the intimate communication among the musicians was tangible.

They presented a beautifully balanced program. The appetizer, or perhaps salad, was a trio by the Venetian baroque composer Antonio Lotti, which served to introduce the musicians.

Mr. Bailey is especially charismatic. Naturally emotive, he plays with great flair and warms up the music with a generous sensitivity. The cello and violin are absolute equals in this group and Mr. Schmidt is a perfect fit, Mr. Bailey's peer in tone control, virtuosity, and brio. Ms. Perlman, equally assertive, plays with crisp articulation and weight control, although the piano should probably have been a harpsichord for Lotti.

The Beethoven Trio that followed (B Flat Major, Op. 11) is top-quality Beethoven, which means enormous vigor, intense expression and exacting craft. The performance was fiery. In the opening Allegro con Brio the string tone was full, the piano sparkled and roared, the momentum was headlong. The Adagio was gorgeous and full of feeling, and the last movement, a theme and variations, was



DAVID BAZEMORE PHOTO

The Perlman-Schmidt-Bailey Trio — violinist Giora Schmidt, pianist Navah Perlman and cellist Zuill Bailey, from left — perform at the Four Seasons Biltmore.

thrilling.

The three musicians projected at a volume that would have filled a much larger hall and sonically, the quieter passages were more successful. But their sense of how the musical syntax should go was meticulously coordinated and exactly right. The honesty of their gusto carried all before it.

Lowell Liebermann's Trio No. 2, Op. 17, was commissioned by the group and they played it with similar conviction. Mr. Liebermann's piece went well after the Beethoven.

Although it has only one movement, it too is structured fast-slow-fast. Marked *Molto Rhythmico*, it's dark and stormy music, written in a kind of distorted tonality, using the instruments normally but making some weird sounds. The eerie middle section opened up into lovely melodies on the violin and cello. The finale was brilliant and virtuosic.

They rounded out the program with Schubert's Trio No. 1 in B Flat Major, Op. 99. Elevated is the word for this music. Schubert takes you up to a

plane of elevated civility and sensibility and keeps you there for quite a long time. Perlman-Schmidt-Bailey's playing was wonderful and it was a great pleasure to hear them.

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