



Quartet Performs With Passion, Humor

They rocked the house.

The Rossetti Piano Quartet got the local Music Guild chamber music series off to a slam-bang start with a big, bold program at Daniel Recital Hall the other night.

Do I need to remind everyone that a piano quartet is not four pianos? Good.

Three members of the Rossetti String Quartet, frequent visitors to this series, and pianist Rina Dokshitsky combined forces to give extroverted, outsized performances of three masterpieces of the repertoire by Beethoven, Dvořák and Brahms. The evening was full of humor and passion. Who said chamber music was boring?

Dokshitsky (and you'll want to smile when you say that, pardner) is a teeny tiny thing, but she gets a whopping huge, rich sound out of the 88 keys at her disposal. The Daniel's house Steinway has never sounded so good. And the Rossettis matched her in volume and intensity — the resulting soundfest was lots of fun.

Mozart basically invented the piano quartet, which is a piano trio plus a viola. The addition of the viola adds a richness to the texture, with the viola sometimes taking the role of second violin, sometimes engaging in dialogue with the cello, and sometimes going its own way. Thomas Diener, the Rossetti's violist of the occasional headband, is no shrinking violet, and his extroverted music-making was on display the entire evening.

Beethoven's Op. 16 was originally a piece for piano and winds. Beethoven rewrote it in piano quartet form to pick up a few quick bucks from his publisher, and it is a remarkably successful piece both ways. This piece is a good example of Beethoven's irresistible, though often rough, humor, and the Rossettis played it to the hilt.

Dvořák's music for piano and strings shows this composer at his best, and the Op. 87 piano quartet is a real gem. Nobody writes chamber music as stylish, melodic and engaging as the Bohemian composer. This kind of big, swaggering piece is right up the Rossetti's alley.

Brahms, who was Dvořák's patron, wrote what is probably the iconic masterpiece in this genre, his piano quartet in G minor, Op. 25. Arnold Schoenberg, of all people, transcribed this piece for full orchestra and the result is a real hoot. The original may lack the winds, brass and percussion of the orchestrated version, but the piece, especially in hands of a group like the Rossetti Piano Quartet, has all the gypsy flair and color anyone could ask for.

The finale of this piece is simply amazing, serving to discount Brahms' reputation as a humorless old fuddy-duddy while bringing this wonderful evening of chamber music to a rollicking close.

People aren't supposed to have this much fun at a chamber music concert.

But the Rossettis did, and so did we.