

Benjamin Hochman

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Laredo, others shine again in Mozart

by Mary Ellyn Hutton

Following on the heels of two superb, all-Mozart concerts by the Cincinnati Symphony on Friday and Saturday at Music Hall, the Linton Chamber Music Series presented its own Mozart tribute Sunday afternoon at First Unitarian Church in Avondale.

Three of the same artists took part: violinist/conductor Jaime Laredo, pianist Benjamin Hochman and CSO principal bassoonist William Winstead.

It was an opportunity, not only to enjoy more of the composer's work on the 250th anniversary of his birth, but to hear Laredo, guest conductor with the CSO, in a role more familiar to most listeners, as solo artist and chamber musician.

The program was varied and delectable: Prelude (by Mozart) and Fugue (W.F. Bach, arranged by Mozart) in F Minor for Violin, Viola and Cello; Sonata in B-flat Major for Bassoon and Cello; Sonata in G Major for Violin and Piano; and Quartet in E-flat Major for Piano, Violin, Viola and Cello. Also performing were cellist Sharon Robinson (Laredo's wife) and violist Steven Tenenbom.

Laredo is a well-loved visitor to Cincinnati, as a guest artist with the CSO and as violinist of the renowned Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio, with whom he performed for the 75th anniversary of the Cincinnati Chamber Music Society. Laredo is also a conductor, and he drew a packed house Saturday night at Music Hall, where in the ultimate gesture of respect, the orchestra refused to stand during one of his bows until he yanked concertmaster Timothy Lees to his feet.

He radiated the same warmth and musicality for his up-close Linton audience, about 30 of whom stayed after the concert for Linton's new, intimate "Talk Back" question-and-answer session with the artists.

The two opening works, the string trio and the bassoon-cello sonata, are rarely heard. The trio is unusual in that it pairs a Prelude by Mozart with an arrangement he made of a Fugue by the eldest son of Johann Sebastian Bach. The blend drew a rich sound from the players, both tonally and texturally.

The duo sonata, unusual for its instrumentation, was an ear-opener for its sheer beauty of sound, tenor against bass, reed against strings. The bassoon dominates and the music is similarly genial. The contrasting slow movement was sweet and reflective, while Winstead showed off his arresting agility in the Rondo finale.

Hochman, 26, a student of Claude Frank and Richard Goode and a major discovery for Cincinnati, joined Laredo for the G Major Sonata, a beautiful work comprising a solemn Adagio, a passionate central Allegro and a lovely Andantino theme and variations. Laredo's nuanced playing and Hochman's keen sensitivity made a superlative performance.

The closing Piano Quartet, the program's crowning work, featured effusive melodies and splendid dialogue among players. Hochman shone again, giving a touch of bravura to his skittering passages in the finale.

Repeat is 7:30 p.m. tonight in Congregation Ohav Shalom, 8100 Cornell Rd. in Montgomery. For tickets, call (513) 381-6868.



KIRSHBAUM DEMLER & ASSOCIATES, INC.
711 WEST END AVENUE SUITE 5KN NEW YORK NY 10025
212 222 4843 TEL 212 222 7321 FAX WWW.KIRSHDEM.COM

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