

The art of brilliant chamber music

By **CHRIS SHULL**
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FORT WORTH — When young pianists begin to pursue a musical career, many dream of the soloist's spotlight. They practice piano concertos and recital pieces, the ultimate test of virtuosos.

But most also play lots of chamber music for the sheer joy of exploring a vast and varied repertoire.

Organizers of Piano Texas, the symposium for aspiring professional pianists in its final week at TCU, recognize the importance of chamber music in developing well-rounded performers. It is a component of the festival's daily activities.

The Calder String Quartet from Los Angeles has been in residence at the festival, along with Joseph Kalichstein, an acclaimed soloist who frequently collaborates with the world's top string quartets and with his own trio.

Pianist and quartet shared top billing at a concert Wednesday at PepsiCo Recital Hall. Kalichstein played three solos by Brahms. The quartet played the delightful "Dissonant" quartet by Mozart. They joined forces (minus one violin) for Brahms' Piano Quartet No. 1, Op. 25 to end the program.

There's nothing dissonant about Mozart's quartet except a short, brooding introduction. After that, it's sunny and vivacious. The quartet — Andrew Bulbrook and Benjamin Jacobson, violins; Jonathan Moerschel, viola; and Eric Byers, cello — captured the frivolity often conjured by Mozart's music. Melodies were tossed back and forth between players in the elegant give and take so crucial to good chamber music. The quartet played with a broad, dark tone. Phrases were weighted with color, tapering from one instrument to another.

Kalichstein's solo rendition of Brahms' Variations on a Theme by Schumann became the heavyweight piece on the program. Always melancholy, the pianist conveyed the layered, expressive music with straightforward eloquence shot through with brilliant sheets of sound. A dry, muscular tone articulated by adept finger work and bold, full-handed runs laid bare the complicated machinery underlying Brahms' melodies. By comparison, the gypsy tang and overwrought chords of his Hungarian Dances Nos. 11 and 1 were lightweight.

