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THE PLAIN DEALER



CIM Orchestra and Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio catapult Beethoven at Severance Hall

By Donald Rosenberg, April 18, 2013

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Beethoven is a composer for the ages, but he’s also a composer for all ages. Nowhere was this more apparent than Severance Hall on Wednesday, when two generations of musicians from the Cleveland Institute of Music shared the stage for performances of the Triple Concerto and Symphony No. 3.

The institute scored a major coup last fall when violinist Jaime Laredo and cellist Sharon Robinson – distinguished stalwarts in the chamber-music world – joined the faculty. Soon after arriving, they teamed with pianist Joseph Kalichstein, their colleague for more than 35 years in the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio, for an illuminating concert in the institute’s Mixon Hall Masters Series.

Severance Hall is nearly 10 times as big as Mixon, but **the trio had no trouble projecting its collective gifts in the Triple Concerto, a work that poses all sorts of interpretive and balance challenges.**

Few of these issues placed stress on Wednesday’s performance, which was **more a massive chamber-music gathering than a meeting of piano, violin and cello with orchestra.** Laredo undertook conducting duties from the violin at the start, setting the opening tempo and playing along with his youthful colleagues.

What followed was a series of intimate conversations between soloists and ensemble, with concertmaster Jinjoo Cho occasionally helping out to keep everyone on the same page. Robinson introduced the principal theme in penetrating and expressive manner, soon joined by Laredo’s lean authority and Kalichstein’s sterling pianism. The soloists interacted with inevitable unity and generosity, relishing the opportunity to trade phrases and blend lines with one another and the responsive orchestra.

Jaime Laredo

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The gentle and jovial writing in the Triple Concerto gave way to the towering rhetoric of the Third Symphony, the “Eroica.” **Laredo presided over an account marked by freshness not always conveyed by orchestras that have been playing the work for decades.**

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Laredo and the orchestra inhabited the first movement’s radical aspects, savoring the suspense in its many innovations of form and thematic awakening. Nothing was ponderous about the funeral march, which reached a striking peak, or coy about the scherzo, whose trio of horns made an exuberant traversal of the wide-ranging call to the hunt.

The finale’s variations gave every section of the orchestra a chance to demonstrate the sophistication that is an essential element of the training at CIM. Laredo tested the musicians’ dexterity to the max in the coda, and they delivered with brilliance to match Beethoven’s elation.

Jaime Laredo