

Trio Céleste impresses at Nixon Library

REVIEW

Locally based piano trio plays Beethoven and Dvorák at free concert series.

BY TIMOTHY MANGAN
CLASSICAL MUSIC CRITIC



LISA-MARIE MAZZUCCO

The Trio Céleste performed Sunday at the Nixon Library.

The Trio Céleste, which gave a short performance Sunday afternoon as part of the free concert series at the Nixon Library in Yorba Linda, is a first-class ensemble.

Formed two years ago, the group – pianist Kevin Kwan Loucks and violinist Iryna Krechkovsky (who are husband and wife) and cellist Ross Gasworth – is based here in Orange County, cur-

rently ensemble in residence at the Claire Trevor School of Arts at UCI and directors of the Summer Chamber Music Festival there and of Chamber Music/OC.

The trio is a busy one, just back from a tour of New York, headed out later on Sunday to a concert in Ventura County and now on their way to Northern California,

where they will perform all of Beethoven's piano trios over several concerts.

This listener's first impressions of the ensemble were all good. These players mesh well and easily as a group, thinking, breathing and moving as one. The interpretations were polished to a fare-thee-well.

Krechkovsky, who per-

Trio Céleste

Where: Richard Nixon Library and Birthplace, Yorba Linda

When: Nov. 16

Next: 2 p.m. Nov. 23 soprano Marleena Barber offers "A Holiday Cabaret" at the Nixon Library.

How much: Free

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forms on a Stradivarius, is a precise yet spirited musician; Gasworth is a warm and generous one. Loucks, who played with the piano lid fully open, never overpowered them, uncovering many shades and dynamics in the music at hand, sculpting phrases intelligently.

The free concerts at the Nixon Library, every Sunday

at 2 p.m., not all of them classical, have been going on since the early 1990s.

The concerts, which take place in a comfortable lecture hall/theater with good acoustics, are limited to about an hour in length. Trio Céleste chose two works to perform: the so-called "Kakadu Variations" by Beethoven and the beloved "Dumky" Trio, Op. 90, by Dvorák.

The "Kakadu Variations" is an odd work, published late in the composer's life, but showing evidence of both early and later composition, the simple tune and straightforward variations (early), the somber introduction and double fugue in the finale (late). It goes over smoothly enough, though, and rather lightly, and Trio Céleste captured all of its charm.

The "Dumky" Trio is one of Dvorák's masterpieces, a

suite of nostalgic folk songs, each movement featuring fast, sometimes vigorous, and slow, sometimes melancholy, sections. Here, the group showed the true level of its polish in the many transitions, which simply disappeared. The performance was patient, perfectly paced and seamless.

Trio Céleste is performing all over Southern California in the coming months, but not for the public in Orange County until June, according to its website. At any rate, someone should set up a series outside of academia for these musicians in our area. They've got what it takes, they're home grown, and the piano trio repertoire is a rich one.

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