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Trio Céleste breathes life into classical works in Flagler performance

ARTS

By KEVIN WILT - Special to the Daily News



Trio Céleste — from left, Ross Gasworth, cello; Kevin Kwan Loucks, piano; and Iryna Krechkovskiy, violin — played with laser focus Tuesday as part of the Henry Flagler Museum 2017 Music Series.

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Classical music is often treated as a museum piece, as if it is a frail, delicate thing that must be handled with white gloves. When the Trio Céleste performs, they turn music into a living, breathing, vibrant thing. Members demonstrated this Tuesday night, ironically at a museum, as part of the Henry Flagler Museum 2017 Music Series, with a pair of monstrous piano trios.

The first half of the concert was Antonín Dvořák's *Trio for Piano, Violin and Cello, No. 4 in E minor, Op. 90* (the Dumky Trio). This piece opened with a powerful cello solo from Ross Gasworth, who was joined by violinist Iryna Krechkovsky with an equally big sound. The entire ensemble matched well, with dramatic tempo and mood changes always in lock step. The second movement had a contemporary sound to it, as if the piece were brand new. The movement ended with tight ensemble playing, the last note ringing in the air, a phenomenon that would repeat itself throughout the night.

The trio played with a texture that was always clear. There was never any question which line was the foreground, middle or background. The members' intonation was so spot on that every note played would ring out. Their tone was laser-focused and always resonant. They brought a unified sense of drama and dynamic control to shape each movement. When they played, in the truest sense of the word, they were closer to a rock band jamming than a stiff classical ensemble keeping time. They are the epitome of what chamber musicians should be.

The second half of the concert featured Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky's *Piano Trio, in A minor, Op. 50* (Elegiac Piece). It too started with a dramatic cello solo, with the violin taking over the second phrase. Even when this music was slow and plodding, it was always breathing with life. When the music was faster, they ramped up the drama and lyricism higher still.

The second movement was a long set of variations, with pianist Kevin Kwan Loucks playing the theme. As the piece proceeded, the ensemble balanced the characters of each variation, while maintaining enough consistency to unify the piece.

Some movements had the lightest touch, while others had an enormous, heavy, almost orchestral sound. The air seemed to be sucked out of the room after each variation, as if the absence of their sound left it empty. The piece collapsed into a slow funeral march, but they managed the energy brilliantly and wound things down. The stillness left over at the end dared everyone not to move, not because this was delicate music, but out of respect for the living sound that was now gone.

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