

Artist Management

WEISS-KAPLAN-NEWMAN TRIO

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Trio presents variety in Summer Music Festival

By Peter Jacobi
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The Weiss-Kaplan-Newman Trio made the first of its two IU Summer Music Festival appearances in Auer Hall Thursday evening, focusing on both Romantic era and 20th century repertory.

One heard Schumann, the Fantasiestucke, Opus 88, as part of the festival's Robert Schumann project: the performance of all chamber works by the composer, to mark his 200th birthday. In order, thereafter, the three musicians — pianist Yael Weiss, violinist Mark Kaplan, and cellist Clancy Newman — then performed piano trios of Charles Ives and Antonin Dvorak. In other words: variety there was.

The Ives was a stunner, not only for the manner in which it was performed but for the music itself. Written a century ago, it foreshadowed so much of what was to come in contemporary music, the dissonance, the shifting syncopations, the thematic disconnects, the paucity of development. And yet, the trio — written in fond memory of his undergraduate days at Yale — abounds in tradition, too.

The first movement is far more consonant than dissonant. The second, titled TSIAJ (standing for "This scherzo is a joke"), quotes — mostly in absurd distortion — hymns, American folk and fraternity songs, and music popular among students early in the 20th century. Aural mayhem is the result. Contrarily, the concluding Moderato con moto movement, ending with another quotation, "Rock of Ages," is pensive, lyrical, alluring, a tribute to the stream of music that was Ives' legacy. The musicians treated the score with obvious admiration and an infectious gusto.

Dvorak's Trio in F Minor, Opus 65, is one of the composer's stormier works, less dance-infused, less joyous than one is accustomed to hearing in encounters with his music. That may well be because the trio was written while Dvorak grieved his mother's death. And yet, this personal tragedy undoubtedly also assured the presence of great beauty in the music. Of that, there is much. The performers infused their reading with gobs of passion, building that aura in intensity from movement to movement.

Though the Finale is a sure fire showstopper when done with the vigor experienced on this occasion, for this listener even more impressive was the calmer third movement, Poco Adagio, during which Newman's magnificently resonant cello, Kaplan's soaring violin at its sweetest, and Weiss' piano in gently rhapsodic mode gave the music a special bloom, exquisite, ardent, and fresh.