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Trio's Schuberts distinctive yet molded

By Daniel Webster
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Chamber music is less the sublimation of personalities than the examination of them. The intimate playing demanded in trios and quartets requires accommodation, but not surrender or mere imitation.

The performance of two sprawling Schubert trios Sunday in the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society series illustrated the definition of such playing at the same time it celebrated the joyous outpouring of melody in the two works.

It seemed apt that the concert - by Ignat Solzhenitsyn, piano; Sophie Shao, cello; and Soovin Kim, violin - was at the American Philosophical Society, because the performance seemed to be as much about music as being of music.

The playing underlined three distinctive personalities at work in the same rich field. Leadership moved easily from one to another, unlike the model of keyboard control in the now-disbanded Beaux Arts Trio. Leadership, in fact, came from the score: Its shape, momentum, color shifts, the eloquence of trills signaled how prominence was shared.

These are expansive works; it was like hearing the "*Eroica*" and the *Symphony No. 5* in one sitting. Taking all the repeats is a plan supported by the architectural demands of the music, even though Schubert wrote on his manuscript of the *Trio in E flat* that the repeats he had written were to be ignored - a conundrum never to be solved. Taking the repeats gives listeners a chance to savor the melodic richness, the harmonic originality, and the wonderful canons that wind through the works.

The musicians began with the *Trio in B flat*, with some understandable reserve at the beginning. But that wore away quickly as the flow of the music swept the three into playing that moved through sweetness, declamation, fury, and

patrician formality. The obvious enthrallment within the group gave the music extra dimension, for the best of the playing seemed a kind of tribute to the notes on the page.

In the course of the afternoon, listeners had ample time to admire the golden piano sound, the subtlety and exuberance of the violin, and the gravity and polish of the cello. How distinctive they were; how finely molded they became.

They played the slow movements with the thoughtfulness to make them stand as the fulcrums of their trios. The scherzos had depths beneath their brightness, and the sense of joy from the stage gave each work its final fillip.