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MUSIC REVIEW | YEFIM BRONFMAN AND FRIENDS

Championing Luminaries of Chamber Music's Past, and Visionaries of Its Future

By [ALLAN KOZINN](#)

For the finale of his Perspectives series at [Carnegie Hall](#) on Sunday, the pianist [Yefim Bronfman](#) assembled a group of his colleagues — the violinist [Gil Shaham](#), the cellist Lynn Harrell and the [Emerson String Quartet](#) — for an afternoon of unusually vigorous and engaging chamber playing. The program's comfortably familiar pillars were the [Shostakovich](#) Piano Quintet (Op. 57) and the [Tchaikovsky](#) Trio (Op. 50). But Mr. Bronfman also devoted a significant part of the program to premieres by Marc-André Dalbavie and Jörg Widmann.

Mr. Dalbavie's Trio No. 1 (2008) begins with the piano playing a slowly morphing chord that starts as a series of strident blasts and gradually loses its sharp edges. Woven between these chords are fragments of a lyrical theme, in tandem violin and cello lines. As the theme coalesces, and the piano chords melt, Mr. Dalbavie builds a rich, harmonically freewheeling texture that invites the kind of intensity in which Mr. Bronfman, Mr. Shaham and Mr. Harrell thrive.

Yet within this often dense harmonic cloud, Mr. Dalbavie placed a recurring theme based on a straightforward descending scale that made its way from piano to strings and back, as if it were the grandest of musical ideas. Toward the end, a rising scale briefly took its place. It seemed an odd gesture, but perhaps it was Mr. Dalbavie's way of showing how complexity and startling simplicity can play off each other. In the end the score was hard to resist, and it could hardly have had more eloquent champions.

In Mr. Widmann's "XI Humoresken" (2007), Mr. Bronfman had the stage to himself. This set of short piano works takes its cue from Schumann in the pieces' flightiness, variety and virtuosic demands. And like the Dalbavie, this work moves easily between lyricism and jaggedness, innocence and self-conscious sophistication. The most striking piece, "Zerrinnendes Bild" ("Streaming Image"), was a study in tightly compressed virtuosity.

Mr. Bronfman and the Emerson Quartet joined forces for a precise, searing account of the Shostakovich, in which the composer's icy clarity and fermented rage came through vividly. It was the kind of performance you think would be hard to top for sheer passion, but Mr. Bronfman, Mr. Shaham and Mr. Harrell surpassed it in a thundering no-holds-barred performance of the Tchaikovsky.

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