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MUSIC

Amelia Piano Trio

The musical boundaries between East and West have been bashed away at for so long it's hard to tell where they are anymore. From the orientalism of early-20th-century France to the postmodern work of composers like Tan Dun and Zhou Long, the border has long been a breeding ground for new ideas, and on Saturday evening the gifted young Amelia Piano Trio (as part of the Dumbarton Concerts series in Georgetown) presented a program called "East Meets West" that explored this music with passion and a playful sense of adventure.

Long thought to be lost, Debussy's early Piano Trio in G was recently reconstructed from fragments, and has emerged as an engaging if frustrating work. Beautifully played by the Amelia, it showed traces of Asia here and there, but never really approached the near-perfect orientalism of later works like "Pagodes."

The next work was more of a stretch. Mozart was all of 8 years old when he wrote his Sonata in F, K. 7, and it won't ever rank as one of mankind's most glorious achievements -- even when arranged for violin, cello and the two-stringed Chinese violin called the erhu. Wang Guowei turned in a flavorful account of this odd little curiosity. A more organic blending took place in the world premiere of "Scenes Through a Window" by the Chinese American composer Lu Pei. Written for piano trio, erhu and the traditional lute called the pipa, it's an extremely smart, colorful and kinetic piece that builds on traditional Chinese music without ever descending into sentimentality. Utterly graceful playing on the pipa by Yihan Chen made it even more delectable.

The evening closed with a sweeping reading of Maurice Ravel's Piano Trio in A Minor, an early transcultural masterpiece which draws on a popular Basque folk dance, Malaysian verse forms and styles from the baroque. The Amelia brought it off with exceptional clarity and elegance.

Stephen Brookes