

Great music-making at Mozart Festival

By Jim Lowe

TIMES ARGUS STAFF

BURLINGTON – The cellist was elegant, refined and reserved; the pianist was extroverted and passionate. Yet they made music together – and what beautiful and exciting music it was!

Pianist Menahem Pressler and cellist Antonio Meneses, members of the famed Beaux Arts Trio, performed Beethoven's five sonatas for cello and piano Tuesday at the University of Vermont Recital Hall, as part of the 31st annual Vermont Mozart Festival. To perform all five sonatas in a single concert is a feat, but to perform them with the intimacy and intensity that these two masters achieved was a joy.

The crowning jewel of Tuesday's concert was the Sonata No. 3 in A Major, Opus 5, No. 2, from the middle period of Beethoven's career, and Pressler and Meneses' performance was deep, passionate and sublime. The lyrical and haunting opening movement, *Allegro ma non tanto*, was performed expressively and achieved a feeling of real grandeur, while the rhapsodic *Scherzo* was fleet, though lyrical, and exciting. But it was the intimate lyricism in the deeply plied slow movement, *Adagio cantabile*, that tore at the heartstrings – moving all too soon into the driving finale – *Allegro vivace*.

Meneses plays with a quiet expressiveness, always with musically introspective nuance and a feeling of movement. Pressler, who just turned 80, is more brash but with a deep and canny musi-

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cal understanding borne of those many years of musical experience. Despite their disparate styles, their musical intimacy was profound. They didn't just play the music, they lived the music – together.

The profundity of their performance was particularly clear in the final sonata, No. 5 in D Major, Opus 102, No. 2, from Beethoven's late period. The opening *Allegro con brio* was passionate, yet lyrical and grand; the hauntingly simple slow movement, *Adagio con molto sentimento d'affetto*, was intimate, profound and glorious music-making; the finale,

Allegro; Allegro fugato, ends with a driving fugue, and despite two hours of playing, never lost its musical intensity.

It did take the two, Meneses in particular, most of the first sonata to warm up. Pressler's performance wasn't note-perfect, but its musical direction and power never flagged. But, most importantly, it seemed that more than just playing these five masterpieces, Meneses and Pressler sang them together.

Tuesday's Vermont Mozart Festival concert was as good music-making as one can hear anytime or anywhere – in fact, it was great music-making.