

Exciting debut by UNI trio

Des Moines Sunday Register

CEDAR FALLS, IA – Chamber music in Iowa has been enriched by the arrival of an ensemble that makes truly exciting music and that already has achieved a rapport and confidence quite remarkable in view of its fledgling status.

As a rule of thumb, a year of playing together is considered necessary in order for a group of instrumentalists to achieve that degree of smoothness and sharpness necessary to the success of so intimate an art.

The International Trio, based at the University of Northern Iowa here, made its public debut on the campus last week and left no doubt in anybody's mind that a significant musical voice had officially presented itself to the public,

Playing in Russell Hall to an audience of about 550 persons, the players demonstrated that they not only are fine technicians but, above all, that each is a sensitive musician who can shape music expressively.

Members of the International Trio, all music faculty members at UNI, Iowa, are Howard Aibel, piano; Vasile Beluska, violin, and Stefan Reuss, cello.

For their debut performance, they chose a program that was lovely throughout. The singing lyricism that ran from start to finish was also well calculated to bring out the special qualities of each instrument in a program that consisted of Trio No. 1 in G of Haydn, Beethoven's Trio Op. 70, No. 1 in D ("Ghost") and the Trio Op. 50 in A minor by Tchaikovsky.

This same program, by the way, will be presented in Des Moines when the International Trio comes to the Art Center for a 2:30 p.m. recital in the Levitt Auditorium Jan. 18.

If there was ever any doubt about this ensemble's preparedness and confidence it came at the outset of their debut performance last Monday during the first movement of the Haydn Trio.

Melodically it is by far the least appealing of the three movements and it was approached with noticeable hesitancy on the part of musicians, who approached with noticeable hesitancy on the part of musicians, who appeared to experience some difficulty in establishing firm and unhesitating contact with each other.

This, however, was never to recur. All that followed was a model of elegant playing by musicians who had established communication once and for all.

In Haydn's time, the prevailing idea of this genre was that of a kind of piano sonata in which violin and cello only occasionally attain more than fleeting independence from the keyboard.

There are marvelous moments of gentle lyricism for both violin and cello in the middle movement, and the gypsy rondo of the final movement is famous for its drive and rhythmic strength.

That said, this Haydn Trio still remains a showpiece in which the keyboard leads: pianist Aibel did so with magnificent warmth, sureness and all manner of attention to expressive and well-rounded phrasing.

THE BEETHOVEN "Ghost" Trio that followed, so named because of the tremolo piano chords that heighten the feeling of desolation in the slow movement, came through with a sense of

majesty and an admirably balanced flow in which each instrument sang out with individual power while also retaining equal stature as an ensemble member.

Such balance is impressive when one realizes that the musicians have been playing as a group only since August.

To the Beethoven Trio, the musicians gave a sense of the melody, spaciouly presented and alive in every nuance. They gave a similar feeling to the Trio in A minor by Tchaikovsky.

Tchaikovsky's orchestral works are so popular that his smaller works are often ignored, which is too bad, because a trio like this one embodies melodic passages as ravishing as any composer ever wrote.

What Tchaikovsky could do to bring out the full gamut of expressive content inherent in a string instrument is unique. Beluska's violin and Reuss's cello, sometimes singly and often in unison, sang out with rich, full sound, communicating beautifully with each other and endowing the whole with deep sentiment that never degenerated into sentimentality.

Cellist Reuss, who recently won the Vittorio Gui International Chamber Music Competition in Florence, Italy, was particularly impressive. In his hands, a cello can fill a hall with an urgent, rich and vibrant sound that has infinite appeal.

A native of West Germany, Reuss is a newcomer to Cedar Falls, having joined the UNI music facility this year after extensive concertizing at home and as a member of Camerata Bariloche, a chamber music ensemble from Argentina.

Beluska is in his second year as a UNI faculty member. He is a native of Romania, where he taught until leaving for the United States in 1976 and entering Southern Methodist University as a graduate student.

Aibel, who has won top awards at the International Busoni Competition as well as the Walter W. Naumburg Foundation Award, was a student of Rosina Lhevinne at the Juilliard School and taught for 11 years at Juilliard before coming to Iowa. He is in his third year at UNL.