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Haydn Trios: A Lesson in Musical Evolution



The Mendelssohn Piano Trio's show offered a 21st-century twist on Haydn. (Courtesy Mendelssohn Piano Trio)

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The Mendelssohn Trio's concert at the Hungarian Embassy offered Haydn in 21st-century garb -- four piano trios, played with a fine mix of energy and restraint on the modern instruments to which we're accustomed. Pianist Ya-Ting Chang articulated nicely and never over-pedaled, but because delicacy is not the defining characteristic of the modern concert grand, the piano dominated, for better or for worse. Cellist Fiona Thompson, with a largely subsidiary role, nevertheless handled each phrase with close attention to shape and weight, and violinist Peter Sirotn played agilely if without much personality.

One piece overlapped the two programs, the D Minor Piano Trio, Hob. XV:23, which came across as two quite different works altogether. The Esterhazy Machine's version projected ornamentation and romantic exuberance most strongly. The Mendelssohn Trio's performance emphasized, in turn, portentousness, sophistication and playfulness. Both were delightful.

The Mendelssohn Trio is in residence with the D.C. Embassy Series that sponsored its concert.