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Renaissance

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VERY POLISHED, ALL POLISH —Poland's Janusz Prusinowski Trio had two friends sit in on a spell-binding concert. Szczepan Pospieszalska, Michal Zak, Janusz Prusinowski, Piotr Piszczatowski, Piotr Zgorzelski (l-r) Photo by Serina Duarte

Maybe the five members of the Janusz Prusinowski Trio cannot count, but can they ever play music. They can also, it seems, time travel without a DeLorean.

Playing traditional music from their native Poland continuously for an hour, the ironically misnamed five-man trio was marvelous, bringing bouncy medieval music through time with the wisdom of Renaissance scholars and the passion of Preservation Hall.

Mazurek, a style descended from vocalists creating music from mechanical movements of dance, longs to be played in great halls or on verdant spring hillsides. It was evocative and transcendent.

Janusz Prusinowski enchanted listeners with his fiddle, entering the fray midway into the first piece with a solo that told a story with a voice like epic poets Homer or Virgil. He also played the cymbaly, a horizontal stringed instrument, by

tapping the strings with hammers. Despite a percussive approach, the music was both vibrant and mellow.

Michal Zak and Szczepan Pospieszalski provided the wind support. Zak switched between the smooth and exotic sound of the shawm, a Renaissance woodwind instrument, and the free-flowing tone of his traditional flute. Pospieszalski captivated with the heroic flare of his trumpet, breaking through his counterparts call like dawn slaying the night.

Providing the foundation this column of magic was built upon was percussionist Piotr Piszczatowski and cellist Piotr Zgorzelski. Working perfectly in sync, they kept the rhythm in an unquellable sea of freedom and improvisation.

Zgorzelski demonstrated a walking dance that laid the basis for Polish music. When the entire ensemble joined in, the echoes of the Renaissance rattled through the audience.

A traditional marriage song played by the quintet began with stomping and singing, more akin to a Scandinavian pub than a wedding. It was celebration music that deserved to survive the ages.

Kujawiak, a style native to central Poland, stood out as a melodic antithesis to the grand *Mazurek* music played most of the night. Slower and more structured than the other pieces, Zgorzelski and Piszczatowski quieted the performance as Prusinowski fiddled an ominous hymn. Interwoven with these dark gloomy yet curious waves of sound was Zak, feyly fifeing away, creating a light-hearted and hopeful melody.

Never short on stories, the band answered questions, explained the musical theories behind the music they played and shared the origins of some of their instruments.

Piszczatowski said he biked from village to village in Poland trying to find his famed drum, only to find that by buying it he had taken an annual tradition away from the town he bought it from. He returns every year to keep the villages' traditions alive.

A cymbal used by the group was made from a German World War II tank, which has to be satisfying for any Polish percussionist. Zgorzelski's antique cello was made by a village carpenter who, nearing death, realized he had spent a lifetime making furniture and wanted to leave a legacy behind.

Somewhere in Heaven the carpenter must be smiling. Thanks to the brilliant Prusinowski Trio, his legacy is assured.

Tags: [Janusz, music, Polish, Recital, Trio](#)

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