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Music review: Grand Montgomery Chamber Series: Furuya Sisters

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The acclaimed Furuya Sisters played Sunday afternoon for the Grand Montgomery Chamber Music Series at the Montgomery Senior Center. The three sisters were born in Japan and came to the States at an early age. They are graduates of the Juilliard School of Music and have performed throughout the world. The trio consists of cellist Mimi, pianist Sakiko and violinist Harumi. They played as soloists (by heart) and as a duet and trio in a varied program of elegant and appealing classics. With their technical mastery, attention and energy, they won the audience's enthusiastic approval and applause.

Mimi opened the concert with J. S. Bach's Suite for Solo Cello No. 3 in C major, one of six from his famed unaccompanied cello series. The prelude is a full-scale movement, with a dashing arpeggio and final powerful chord. The allemande is upbeat with triple meter and three semiquavers, the courante runs back and forth, a sarabande slows the pace, two bourree in duple time weave fast and slow measures with a fascinating melody and a fast-stepping gigue finishes with a flourish. The soloist exercised perfect control with warmth of interpretation.

Pianist Sakiko next played Chopin's Andante Spianato et Grande Polonaise Brillante in E flat major. The two parts contrast with one another: the "smooth" andante is lyrical and nocturne-like with rippling scales and arabesque cadences, while the polonaise is a fanfare of dancing rhythms and bravura chords. The soloist played with fluidity and grace and received a rousing ovation. Bach's Allemande from his Partita for Solo Violin No. 2 in D minor allowed Harumi to show her skill with a virtuoso display of runs and rubatos. She handled the complex texture and timing with true dexterity.

Sakiko and Harumi teamed up for Saint-Saens "Havanaise in E major." The violin plays the Habana melody while the piano supplies the four-note continuo through the alternating allegro and allegretto movements. The instruments eventually switch roles as the piano develops the engaging theme. A tango introduces another theme and the work ends with a flourish of Latin rhythms.

After intermission, the sisters joined in playing Tchaikovsky's Trio for Piano, Cello and Violin in A minor, a work dedicated to the memory of pianist Nicholas Rubenstein. Its opening Elegiac Piece is announced by the cello and developed by the piano and strings in deeply mournful strains, to close with a moving funeral march led by the bell-like notes of the piano. The movement states its theme of sorrow and offers plaintive variations. As an encore the sisters offered the second movement of Mendelssohn's Trio for Piano, Cello and Violin No. 1, a tenderly Romantic piece that contrasted clearly with Tchaikovsky's sad elegy.