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Exploring Influences And Finding Inspirations

When the violinist Midori and the pianist Marc-André Hamelin performed Ravel's Sonata for Violin and Piano on Wednesday evening at the Rose Theater,

MUSIC REVIEW

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notes and phrases were as carefully placed as stones in a Japanese garden. But the details blended into a seamlessly organic whole, flowing from a languid, delicate Allegretto into Midori's sultry, smoky rhapsodizing in the jazz-influenced second movement, then into the frenzy of the concluding Perpetuum mobile.

The sonata opened the first of three concerts presented by Great Performers at Lincoln Center in which Midori explores the music of Alfred Schnittke, Toru Takemitsu and composers who influenced them. On Wednesday the spotlight was on Takemitsu, with his sensual, translucent works framed in the sonorous light of Ravel and Debussy.

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th many French painters were fascinated by Japanese art. Water inspired both Japanese engravers and French artists and composers, particularly Debussy. The French aesthetic was more aligned with Japanese ideals than with the thunderous Germanic traditions.

Takemitsu, who died in 1996, referred to Debussy as his mentor, and that influence can easily be discerned in Takemitsu's

The series continues on Feb. 24 and May 4 at the Rose Theater, Broadway and 60th Street; (212) 721-6500, lincolncenter.org.

Midori
Rose Theater

shimmering harmonies. Takemitsu too composed music based on watery themes, including "Between Tides" (1993) for violin, piano and cello, performed eloquently here by Midori and Mr. Hamelin with the cellist Johannes Moser. It is a meditative set of variations on a brief, opening conversation among the three instruments, with the Debussian harmonies and Ravelian glow punctuated intermittently by spikier textures.

After that transcendent work the animated opening of Debussy's String Quartet, which concluded the program, seemed almost rambunctious. The excellent Miró Quartet illuminated its lilting melodies, graceful rhythms and colorfully ambiguous harmonies with finesse, eliciting applause from the enthusiastic audience between most movements. The Andantino was particularly fine, with the evocative themes languidly exchanged through a gauzy pianissimo.

The Miró Quartet also performed Takemitsu's sonically lustrous "A Way a Lone" (1981), inspired by James Joyce's novel "Finnegans Wake." The work is based on the pitches indicated, according to German musical notation, in the word "SEA" (the pitch E flat is spelled Es, which here equals S) and the motif is woven throughout. Tremolos and glissandos evoke darkly mysterious watery landscapes, and with perfectly coordinated crescendos, the Miró Quartet unleashed waves of voluptuous sound.



STEPHANIE BERGER

Midori, on violin, and Marc-André Hamelin on piano.