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An Intimate Setting, Packed, but Intimately

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The elegant, wood-paneled gallery room at the Kosciuszko Foundation on East 65th Street in Manhattan can accommodate at most about 120 people for concerts. It was packed on Wednesday night for the final program of the fourth season of the Lyric Chamber Music Society of New York.

One hopes the turnout will not tempt this adventurous society into moving its concerts elsewhere. The gallery is exactly the type of intimate space for which chamber music was intended. Even the genial Saint-Saëns Sonata for Clarinet and Piano, which opened the program, sounded like a significant work in that setting.

Being so close to the excellent clarinetist Vadim Lando and the pianist Richard Bishop made a big difference in the impact of the music, especially Mr. Lando's subdued pianissimo playing. Mr. Lando showcased his virtuosity in the "Rigoletto" Fantasia di Concerto for Clarinet and Piano, a pastiche of tunes from that Verdi opera turned into an unabashed display piece by the principal clarinetist of La Scala in Verdi's day.

The evening's other guest artist was the amazing bassoonist Martin Kuuskmann, who is intent on having a successful solo career, not exactly common among players of his instrument. Mr. Kuuskmann has won considerable notice for his dynamic performances with the Absolute Ensemble, especially his solo turn in Michael Daugherty's "Dead Elvis," which Mr. Kuuskmann performs as an Elvis impersonator, complete with gyrations and glittery costume.

On this evening he was just himself, that is to say, an easygoing young musician from Estonia.

Mr. Kuuskmann played stunningly in Variations Concertantes for Bassoon and Piano by Ida Gotkovsky, who teaches at the Paris conservatory.

This conservatively modern work explores every tonal and technical potential of the bassoon. Mr. Kuuskmann should be grateful to Mr. Bishop for playing the dauntingly hard piano transcription of the original orchestra part so well. How often will the pianist get to play this curiosity in the future?

Mr. Kuuskmann also delivered a gripping account of the Swiss-born composer Daniel Schnyder's restless, perky, jazz-infused 1995 Sonata for Bassoon and Piano, which also gave Mr. Bishop another workout.

But at least he may get more chances to play it, since the work was intended for soprano saxophone, B-flat clarinet or oboe, and was appropriated for bassoon by the determined Mr. Kuuskmann.