

# WASHINGTON POST

## CLASSICAL MUSIC

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**Sigrid Trummer and Elena Ostleitner**

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Pianist Sigrid Trummer and music sociologist Elena Ostleitner, both Austrians and advocates for female composers, took a risk in spotlighting four little-known women from the old Austro-Hungarian Empire -- Stephanie Wurmbrand-Stuppach, Maria Hofer, Johanna Muller-Hermann and Agnes Tyrrell -- at the Austrian Embassy on Monday night. Granted, the existence of their compositions is remarkable given their difficult social and (in some cases) personal conditions, which Ostleitner illuminated in her remarks. Still, pitting these women's efforts against pieces by their famous teachers -- Johannes Brahms, Arnold Schoenberg, Alexander Zemlinsky and Franz Liszt, respectively -- made for some tough matchups for the women.

Despite Trummer's attentive playing, the music of both Wurmbrand-Stuppach and Tyrrell sounded generically romantic, well-tuned gestures without much personality; they suffered in comparison with Trummer's subtle, penetrating performances of two Brahms intermezzi and her exciting, swaggering rumble through Liszt's "Variations on Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen."

On the other hand, the two selections Trummer played from Muller-Hermann's "Piano Pieces" beat out the two Zemlinsky "Fantasies After Poems by Richard Dehmel"; both had an abundance of lushly indeterminate romantic harmony, but the dancelike pulse in Muller-Hermann's music made her pieces sound fresher. And Hofer's toccata "The Machine," though overlong, intriguingly contrasted its motoric rhythms with mostly delicate, distant harmonies, both vividly realized in Trummer's performance. Hofer, though, got a bit of help in her contest from Monday night's storm, whose pounding on the embassy's skylights unfortunately drowned out most of the quiet moments in Schoenberg's very quiet "Six Little Piano Pieces."

-- **Andrew Lindemann Malone**

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