


# Classical Music Review: In hands of Miró Quartet, Kevin Puts' 'Credo' astounds

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It's not often that a brand-new piece of music – 19 minutes' worth, no less – hits you right in the solar plexus. But that's how it was Monday evening with Kevin Puts' two-year-old string quartet *Credo*. After a riveting performance by the Miró Quartet, at Caruth Auditorium, patrons of the Dallas Chamber Music series were wide-eyed at the aural and emotional impact of the piece.

Formerly a professor at the University of Texas in Austin, and in 2005-2006 the Fort Worth Symphony's composer-in-residence, Puts (rhymes with "soots") now teaches at Baltimore's Peabody Conservatory. Personal experiences inspired four of the quartet's five movements, arrayed more or less symmetrically and played without pause. It helped to have both program notes by Laurie Shulman and cellist Joshua Gindele's spoken introduction, with excerpts performed by the quartet.

The opening "Violin Guru of Katonah" recalls a visit to a luthier, a repairer of stringed instruments. Fragments of melody, flourishes and oscillations weave through drones and slowly rocking chords.

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Something comparable, though more introspective, happens in the finale, titled "Credo." But here the bits of melody, passed from one instrument to another, gradually coalesce into something vaguely folk-influenced, finally twined between the two violins.

A central intermezzo is a gentle, dreamy dance. Framing it are two nimble "Infrastructure" movements, with scurrying figures suggesting a train hurtling down tracks, tooting its horn.

Without pandering or sentimentality, the piece was as emotionally touching as it was beautifully crafted. It's hard to imagine a more compelling performance than the Miró's.

The concert opened with a no less vivid, communicative performance of a Haydn G major Quartet (Op. 77, No. 1). This was no Royal Doulton Haydn, but music fairly exploding with invention, drama, wit and warmth, and it was played to the hilt.

Mendelssohn's 200th birthday (last Monday) was marked with a performance of his F minor Quartet (Op. 80). Though attractive and well-wrought, it was a reminder that Mendelssohn has no real "hit" in the medium.

The Miró played it ardently – too much so in some overheated fortissimos – without quite making a single musical gesture linger in the mind. But a loud standing ovation was rewarded with a surprisingly straitlaced account of the slow movement of the composer's D major Quartet (Op. 44, No. 1).