

AVANT-GARDE TRIO ON GALLERY SERIES

Pasles, Chris

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Ah, the avant-garde. Who else would present a serious, formally dressed but obscenely named trio of musicians, a man with a slash out of his hair cutting open a plastic chicken, a curious duo singing a song with a political message?

Fortunately, not at the same time.

Such were the performers featured at the second installment of the new music series at Traction Gallery, Sunday.

The "Fat . . ." trio, whose full name cannot be printed, proved fairly conservative as far as new music techniques are concerned. The main emphasis of cellist and vocalist Vertza, violist and vocalist Josie Roth, and cellist Michael Intriere seemed less on experimentation than on producing concentrated, improvisatory but clearly structured works.

Nine untitled pieces ranged from a gruff, vaguely Bartok-like composition to a humorous, though finally poignant, take-off on the waltz. In each a different

method of bowing and attack was highlighted, and frequently some sweet scat singing by Vertza, often doubled by Roth, was evoked. Arguably the most effective piece was the fourth, in which an expressive cello melody emerged phantom-like from an explosive series of reiterated, dissonant chords.

Far from these formally tight works were several theater pieces by gallery associate director David Hughes. "Three Dreams" proved vague and self-indulgent, with biblical narration of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac or Jacob's wrestling with the angel parodied by Hughes' treatment of plastic or real chicken carcasses. But "Dancing Ban in China" worked a factual news account into incredulity, anger and repression and effectively paved the way for "Rupture" in which a rock-accompanied racy argument about alternative homosexual life styles was turned into a message of political unity at the end.

—CHRIS PASLES

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