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Arts & Entertainment

Temple Audience Feels Like Part Of the Performance at Mostly Music

By BARBARA THOMSON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Ani Kafavian, violin; Paul Neubauer, viola; Carter Brey, cello; Liang Wang, oboe; Mozart, *Oboe Quartet in F Major*; Britten, *Phantasy Quartet for Oboe and Strings*; von Dohnanyi, *Serenade in C Major for String Trio*; Temple Emanu-El, Westfield, November 14, 7:30 p.m.

A large crowd was in attendance at Sunday's "Mostly Music" concert. This New York chamber music group has been performing together for many years, usually with co-directors Ani Kafavian and Carter Brey joined by musical friends. Sunday's program featured music for oboe and string trio, and was a chance to hear some less-known repertoire.

Mozart's *Oboe Quartet* (this term does not mean four oboes, just four players, one of whom is an oboist) was written for his good friend Friedrich Ramm, a virtuoso player who was principal oboist in the Munich orchestra. The oboe in the 18th Century was a much more rudimentary instrument than now, as modern oboes have many improvements, which have made them easier to play. Even by today's standards, this is a difficult work; on the oboe Ramm used, it was even harder. Mozart was clearly challenging his friend; the work is, in essence, an oboe concerto with string trio accompaniment.

Liang Wang, principal oboist of the New York Philharmonic, rose to the occasion splendidly with a warm, rich tone that never got thin or screechy, even in the highest ranges of the instrument. Particularly lovely was the *Adagio* slow movement, a florid, melancholy aria over a simple string background. In the lively finale, *Rondeau-Allegro*, Ms. Wang wowed the audience with his prodigious technique, running up and down the range of the instrument with great speed and dexterity. Mozart would have been proud.

The first half of the program concluded with Benjamin Britten's *Phantasy Quartet for Oboe and Strings*. The work is Britten's opus 2, written while he was a 19-year-old student at the Royal College of Music in London. It is an interesting note that the British compositional scene in the early part of the 20th century is rife with "Phantasies." A wealthy amateur musician, W.W. Cobbett, had established a prestigious competition for single-movement chamber music Phantasies, and composers wrote Phantasy after Phantasy in pursuit of the annual Cobbett Prize. Britten won it in 1932 for his *Phantasy String Quartet*, and later the same year wrote his *Oboe Phantasy*. It did not win the prize, but as performed on the BBC by

famed oboist Leon Goossens, it won the young composer praise for its construction and originality.

The work has a formal intricacy that fascinates analysts, but is not readily heard by the listener. Suffice it to say that there is a lot of disjointed scurrying in the strings while the oboe sails along above it, sometimes joining in, sometimes remaining aloof. A more lyrical middle section with strings alone eventually returns to the opening ideas, and the work closes with the same passage with which it began. The work is intelligent and edgy, but not really heart-warming.

The concert concluded with Ernst von Dohnányi's *Serenade in C Major for String Trio*. (The name Dohnányi is well known to contemporary listeners, as the composer's grandson, Christoph von Dohnányi, was conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra for many years.) Ernst was a Hungarian pianist, composer and conductor of great repute in his native land. He ran afoul of the Fascists in his early years (disbanding the Budapest Philharmonic rather than fire its Jewish members) and later the Communists after World War II, eventually moving to the United States to teach at Florida State University.

His *Serenade* is in five movements of varying lengths—some quite short, several more substantial. The second movement, *Romanza*, gave a chance for the wonderful violinist, Paul Neubauer, to exploit the dark resonance of this under-appreciated instrument with long lines and lush sonorities. A lively *Scherzo* of al-

most continuous rapid passagework led into a substantial *Theme and Variations*, and finally a rondo *Finale* with hints of a Hungarian folk dance.

Each of the works was preceded by informal, often light-hearted remarks by the performers. This established just the right atmosphere for chamber music, which is a more intimate, personal form than orchestral music. The size of the room is important, too, as the intimacy of small ensembles can be lost in large concert halls. Temple Emanu-El's sanctuary is just the right size for music of this type, with the audience being close enough to the stage to see the interaction between the players and feel a part of the performance.

Throughout the concert, it was a pleasure to watch how experienced chamber musicians of this caliber follow each other's subtle cues to stay together. Lacking a conductor, they must make constant eye contact and watch each other's body language intently, breathing together as one organism. All four of these performers are terrific musicians at the top of their game—wonderful intonation, beautiful sound, rhythmic vitality and precision. Westfield is fortunate to have this series, and I look forward to their upcoming performances.

Correction
In an article highlighting the artwork of Westfield artist and psychologist Gail Winbury, last week, her name was misspelled in the headline. We regret the error.

Emerald Trio Wins Honors At Continuo Competition

AREA—The Emerald Trio—comprising Karen Bogardus, flute, Orlando Wells, violin, and James Matthew Castle, piano and composer—impressed the judges with Mr. Castle's original composition, *Sonatina, Op.2*, at a recent Continuo Arts Competition.

The trio has been a dream realized for Ms. Bogardus and Mr. Wells. The married couple had been searching for years for a third person with whom to form a chamber ensemble.

Several years ago, they met Mr. Castle and realized they had found the perfect fit, both musically and personally. Individually, the members of the Emerald Trio wear many different hats in their musical careers: actor, director, composer, re-

cording and concert artists while performing diverse and varied styles from Bach to cabaret and Broadway to hip-hop and jazz.

Their love of classical and contemporary chamber music was the common interest, and from there, the trio was born.

The Young Artist winner was announced at the Continuo Arts Making Musical Dreams Come True Gala in mid-October, following performances throughout the evening by all finalists who were competing for a chance to make their debut in Carnegie Hall with the Continuo Arts Symphonic Chorus and Orchestra.

The artist finalists were soprano Nina Berman, violinist Amy Zhang, soprano Rhie Yungee, mezzo-soprano Clare Maloney, pianist Pham Hoang, soprano Allison Linker, The Argos Piano Trio, mezzo-soprano Sarah Kraus and The Emerald Trio. Originally numbering more than 200, the artists came from as far away as Canada and abroad.

The evening was topped off by a surprise appearance by DESTINO, the Canadian tenor trio that sang for the Beijing Olympics, and last spring, appeared at Carnegie Hall in "The Sounds of Music" concert with Continuo Arts under the baton of Candace Wickes.

Continuo Arts offers an intergenerational choral music program for ages 6 to past 60 and a Summer Musical Theater Conservatory. For more information, call (908) 264-5324 or visit continuoarts.com.



Karen Bogardus, Orlando Wells, Matthew Castle



WHOM WOULD YOU CHOOSE?... Two Scotch Plains residents premiered a short film at Westfield's Rialto Theatre, last Thursday. *Choose*, which was hosted by the Summit chapter of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, focuses on a husband's decision of either treating his comatose wife, who has developed a brain tumor, immediately and possibly killing the couple's unborn child or letting her condition deteriorate irreversibly until the baby can be saved. Above, from left to right, are Deborah Twiss ("Terri"), Carter Roy ("Jonah"), Stephanie Yuhas (assistant producer), Christine Bothelo (producer and Scotch Plains resident) and Robbie Bryan (writer/director and husband of Ms. Bothelo). Pictured at left in the screen shot, Jonah reflects in a bathroom mirror as he thinks about his impending decision.

Choose Focuses on a Decision No One Should Have to Make

By THOMAS S. FORTUNATO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD—Last Thursday, Scotch Plains filmmakers Robbie Bryan and Christine Bothelo premiered their latest short film, *Choose*, at the Rialto Theater in Westfield, hosted by the Summit chapter of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation.

The movie was written and directed by Mr. Bryan, produced by his wife and first-time producer, Ms. Bothelo, and was dedicated to Mr. Bryan's college friend, Liza Ringer-Chance, who passed away earlier this year from ovarian cancer.

"I'm more proud of this than anything I've ever made," Mr. Bryan announced before the movie screened. This movie was a first for the couple due to its compactness, only 20 minutes in length.

"Christie [Bothelo] and I have only made features up until now," he explained.

The movie centers on the character Jonah, played by Carter Roy, a man whose wife, Terri, develops an aggressive brain tumor during the 21st week of pregnancy.

At first, Terri, played by Deborah Twiss, declines to be treated until after her unborn child is capable of surviving outside the womb, but she falls into a coma before that point is reached,

leaving Jonah to make the decision to treat Terri immediately and possibly kill the baby, or let Terri's condition deteriorate irreversibly until the baby can be saved.

Since the movie is short, Mr. Bryan took an interesting approach to tell the story without wasting any time; the movie starts off at the climax, with Terri being wheeled into a hospital unconscious on a stretcher with Jonah following her every step of the way.

From there, the movie flashes back and forth between the present and key moments in the course of Terri's pregnancy, including when the couple first learns of the brain tumor, Terri revealing to her girlfriends that she is pregnant and a heated religious debate between Terri's Catholic parents and Jonah about what to do about this situation.

The movie ends with Jonah, deep in

prayer at the hospital's chapel, being called by a nurse telling him it is time to make his decision. Even though throughout the movie the audience is being hinted at what Jonah's choice is going to be, Mr. Bryan never actually reveals what Jonah chooses, instead opting for viewers to make up their own conclusions at the end of the movie.

"I just wish I had \$5 million to give [Bryan and Bothelo] right now so they can expand [*Choose*]," Ms. Twiss said. "I want to know more about [Terri's] dad; I want to know more about Terri and her husband, and what their whole relationship is."

Following Thursday's screening in Westfield, *Choose* will return to the editing room for some last-minute polishing before it is scheduled to make its way across the country on the film festival circuit.



NAG's Work Does Not Irritate Visual-Art Fans

By MARYLOU MORANO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

AREA—The New Art Group (NAG), six professional artists whose work represents a wide range of visual arts expression, recently exhibited "Imaginary Landscapes," an art show with the theme of landscape as metaphor.

The exhibit, which was held in the Les Malamut Gallery in the Union Public Library, stepped out of the ordinary use of landscape as artistic subject and employed it, instead, as allegory for the human condition.

Westfield artist Francesca Azzara, well known for encaustic paintings, exhibited mixed-media works that were autobiographical.

One such painting, "Pink Moon Rising," was an energetic representation of "places [Ms. Azzara] has visited but never seen."

Joan Dreyer's work often embraces the emotional landscape of grief and loss. Mostly working in fiber, Ms.

Dreyer takes her inspiration from the willow tree. She exhibited several somber-colored works featuring postage-stamp-sized photographs within a larger artistic framework.

Jim Fuess's abstract paintings are full of color and life.

One of his pieces, "Worm Wars 1," is now part of a series of paintings depicting relationships between worms in conflict with each other.

Several of his works were untitled at the time of the exhibit.

"Sometimes, the titles come before the work is even finished; sometimes, much later," he explained.

Among Susan Ahlstrom's exhibited work was "Tree of Life, a Study after Klimt," which was created from delicately flattened slabs of clay, hand formed, fired and mounted on a painted board.

According to Ms. Ahlstrom, it is a study of part of a famous marble, ceramic, enamel and precious stone mosaic wall in the Palais Stoclet in Brussels, known as the Stoclet Frieze and drawn by Austrian artist Gustav Klimt.

"I liked the moving qualities of the branches, how they spiral inward and outward, expanding, contracting, rising and falling," she said.

The work of photographers Nancy Ori and Paul Pinkman rounded out the exhibit.

NAG was formed from the members of the Visual Arts Committee of the Watchung Arts Center about 20 years ago.

The NAG's goal is to develop opportunities for artists to exhibit their work. More information about NAG can be found at newartgroup.com.

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