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Monday, April 7, 2008

## Thayer's final show of season was truly a cleansing experience

### MUSIC REVIEW

By Dan Sweeney Telegram & Gazette reviewer

Introducing the poetry of Robert Frost in high school, my English teacher began the unit with this statement: "Great literature stimulates the brain; poetry cleanses."

As always, she was right, and I think the same can be said about music, because great symphonic works can stimulate the emotions, but chamber music can cleanse them.

That was proven Saturday night in Fitchburg, when the Thayer Symphony Orchestra, with Toshimasa Francis Wada celebrating his 25th year as director, performed the last program of the season with a full range of chamber music before an appreciative audience at the Stratos G. Dukakis Performing Arts Center, at Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School.

Maestro Wada programmed 11 pieces, from the early Baroque to the present, including a world premiere – but the night was also a vehicle to show off the virtuosity of the orchestra's principal players, all of whom soloed.

For openers, Mr. Wada began with the "Rondeau" by Mouret, featuring Bruce Hopkins on his piccolo trumpet, recognizable as the opening theme music for "Masterpiece Theater." This was followed the "Concerto in D for Oboe" by Alessandro Marcell, beautifully played by Wayne Coats, principal oboist of the Thayer.

Two pieces in the first half of the program have questionable authors, the "Adagio in G Minor" by Albinoni, and the "Violin Duet with One Sheet of Music," by Mozart. We know that Tomaso Albinoni did not write the Adagio; it was penned by Remo Giazotto. However, knowing Mozart, I would say yes to the "Duet," for it is a joke piece, which was beautifully played by violinists Khanh Trinh, concertmaster, and Anne Kornfeld.

**"... Great symphonic works can stimulate the emotions, but chamber music can cleanse them."**



A family affair ended the first half, with the Asgeirsson family (mother Cherie on flute, daughter Greta on harp and percussionist-father Kris conducting) doing the opening movement of Mozart's "Harp and Flute Concerto." Cherie Asgeirsson took a very lyrical line approach with the flute, which was answered with very crisp, confident and soulful notes on the harp from Greta. This 17-year-old can play, and I dare say we will hear from her in the future.

Spaced in between were two pieces of "Tafelmusik of Telemann," with Mr. Coats, oboe, and Mr. Hopkins, trumpet, on "Air"; and Cherie Asgeirsson, flute, and Mr. Trinh, violin, on the piece marked "Concerto for Flute." I also must mention cellist Boris Kogan's wonderful rendition of Bach's "Suite for Solo Cello."

A world premiere, supposed to have happened in 1965 in Alaska, was presented with the "Classical Impromptu," by Clinton native Allan Mueller. It is a delightful piece with an upbeat opening theme which is recapitulated in the final development section, and a beautiful, slow middle section highlighted by the solo playing of Mr. Trinh. Alaska's loss is our gain.

Highlight of the second half was the Bach "Brandenburg No. 2," which featured true chamber music of Cherie Asgeirsson on flute, Mr. Coats on oboe, Mr. Hopkins on corno da caccia and Mr. Trinh on violin. The concert ended with Handel's entrance of the "Queen of Sheba," which is fitting, for this was a night of music fit for a queen.

Bravo Maestro Wada and Thayer Symphony — we are cleansed.



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