Going for baroque

Banchetto Musicale opened their season September 28 at 8 pm, First and Second Church, Boston. Boston Museum Trio with counter-tenor Jeffrey Gall at the Museum of Fine Arts, September 30 at 3pm. And the first weekend of the Boston baroque season ended in triumph with the inauguration of the new Willard Martin harpsichord in a more-than-overflowing MIT chapel on September 30 at 9pm.

The opening fixture of a weekend of baroque in Boston came from Banchetto Musicale, starting their season-long series of Bach concerts in the intimate setting of the First and Second Church in Boston. The Harpsichord Concerto in F minor BWV 1061 was played with an open grace; in the second movement, especially, one was left with an impression of baroque grandeur without the least taste of the suavity, was left with an impression of baroque in the second movement, especially, one that the third movement came across a tad uneventfully.

Daniel Stepp, one of this country's foremost baroque violinists, gave a studied interpretation of the Violin Concerto in A minor, BWV 1041. The play between and subsequent union of soloist and continuo was quite exquisite. The second movement saw an expressive violin wander on a serenely soaring trip: the mysterious ethereal quality of Stepp's playing was mesmerizingly beautiful.

Martin Pearlman's qualities at the harpsichord were further demonstrated in the Harpsichord Concerto in D minor, BWV 1052. There is a crisp freshness to his style, which makes all the more brilliant the inordinate contributions of Michael Curry's oboe and Timothy Pitts' bassoon added depth. The third movement saw far better ensemble work, the free flowing interplay of tensions, culminating in an exhilarating rendition of the harpsichord cadenza in James Christie's best performance of the Bach concerto. The sweetness of Fenwick Smith's flute, carefully paced and full of color less character to the flute Sonata in B minor, BWV 1030.

The ensemble was well balanced in a dynamic performance of the Bach Concerto in C minor for two harpsichords, BWV 1058. The fluid viola playing of Gerald ElIAS was particularly notable, and the unadorned contributions of Michael Curry's oboe and Timothy Pitts' bassoon added depth. The third movement saw far better ensemble work, the free floating interplay of tensions, culminating in an exhilarating rendition of the harpsichord cadenza in James Christie's best performance of the Bach concerto. The sweetness of Fenwick Smith's flute, carefully paced and full of color less character to the flute Sonata in B minor, BWV 1030.

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