The English Concert, Nov. 3, Sanders Theatre.

The English Concert opened its 30th anniversary season in Sanders Theatre Saturday night with Handel's Harpsichord Concerto in D minor. Director Trevor Pinnock played solo in Bach's Harpsichord Concerto in D minor. At Pinnock's hands, tension gradually increased during the opening allegro, his diamond-sharp harpsichord playing weaving through a velvet of embracing strings. The movement's cadenza was particularly intense and crown-looking, and just as the listener's brains were about to be smashed to smithereens, the pressure was released by an orchestra effortlessly re-entering to buoy the harpsichord to move on to the movement's conclusion.

The allegro grabbed the mental senses, yet contained the essence of humanity. Pinnock's solo work in the last movement was as intimate as it was powerful; the unusual surrounding ambience in the orchestra created by an impossibly small balance took the work from the environmentally human to the suddenly intimate. Elision is the only word to describe the feeling transmitted as the Concert launched into their joyous rendition of Handel's Concerto Grosso in B-flat, Op. 3, No. J. The interplay of oboe and oboe in the Largo was especially compelling; the sadness and profundity of carefully modulated oboe warmed by the easy line of cellos.

The beauty of the final movement, combining a rhythmic bounce in the strings with a racy oboe solo, brought the work to a sunny and stunning conclusion.

An airy performance of Purcell's Chaconne opened the second part of the concert and was followed by a full and satisfying account of Bach's Suite No. I in C. Strings were ever so smooth and elegant; Pinnock's harpsichord was eloquent. The oboe enchanted, bassoon bloodied. The rapturous standing ovation which greeted the Suite was rewarded with an encore - of the first movement from Boyce's Symphony No. I - afterreveries and joyous to the end.

The Melos String Quartet performance in Krenz Auditorium on Friday night was disappointing. Although they demonstrated a high standard of technical proficiency, the quartet seemed to play the notes but not the music. Although there were some intellectually pleasing moments - especially in the second piece, Bartók's Quartet in E-flat, Op. 127 - there was a lack of warmth throughout the program which made the technical virtuosity empty.

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The Boston Camerata opened its 30th anniversary season with War and Peace, a concert of Renaissance and Baroque music. When I entered, there were two people on stage singing Robert Morton's A Soldier's Resolution. The soprano soloist was to the accompaniment of a small portable electronic keyboard. She was not surprised at the anachronism, but the sheet was quite well performed. The rest of the concert was done with more ancient-looking instruments, such as recorders, shawms, and viols.

Section 1 of the concert closed with the entire company on stage for Händel Schütz's setting of Psalm Two, Wirum Toben die Heiden. The performers flowed into section II, La Battaglia, a collection of martial music. The soprano soloist is to be complimented for her performance of 'Ore, gentil d'anima, io cam mi oon so clearly and powerfully. The next piece, A Soldier's Resolution, had the for viola da gamba playing solo. The gambe performed with grace, from the trumpets on the field to the march back. In the skillful hands of a Camerata player, a viol can quite effectively give the impression of a number of horns.

The third section, Abraham, Abraham... Dead with a result of war - the death of loved ones. Three works comprised this section: The Burial of the Dead, by William Byrd; Triste estava el rey David, by Alonso Mudarra; and Absalom, Absalom-. Schütz's setting of Psalm Two, Wirum Toben die Heiden, the soprano soloist was to the accompaniment of a small portable electronic keyboard. The soprano soloist was not surprised at the anachronism, but the sheet was quite well performed. The rest of the concert was done with more ancient-looking instruments, such as recorders, shawms, and viols.

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