Robin Hood hits the mark

Robin Hood, Museum of Fine Arts, January 10

Charlotte Kaufman has been charming Boston audiences for several years with no-nonsense, ballad-opera performances by The Friends of Dr. Burney. Her group's performances take place in Retina Auditorium at the Museum of Fine Arts as part of a Museum-sponsored early music series of increasingly glittering dimensions.

Robin Hood, Kaufman's latest entertainment, was justifiably a sell-out. Instead of as farce, it came across as funny as beauty by Mary Westbrook-Geha as Marian, a softly-introspective gamba adding color, performance of "The Death of Robin Hood," a ballad from 20th century Virginia. The Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra of Boston, Music Director Larry Hill. Featuring Sanford Sylvan provided some of the most moving playing of the evening in duet with David Ripley, who also accompanied the song on guitar, he brought off "The Piedar of Wakefield" with much style.

The evening ended with an ensemble performance of "The Death of Robin Hood," a ballad from 20th century Virginia, sung with great feeling to complete an entertainment to refresh all the human faculties.

Jonathan Richmond

Pro Arte Orchestra: a hit at Harvard


In 1779, Mozart decided that he was neither adequately paid nor sufficiently respected, and left Salzburg for greater pastures. As a farewell to the graduating students at the University of Salzburg he wrote the "Posthorn Serenade" (Serenade in E-flat, K. 239).

As part of its tradition of premiere performances, the Pro Arte also presented the work of a new composer, David Hoffman. Hoffman's Opening Concerto II is a very superficial piece based upon "continually re-combining short,odic motives which float through a larger metric grid." It reminded me of one of those inevitable childhood accidents when you open the cabinet over the Radar Range and all the pots go crashing to the floor.

Guest soloist David Deveau performed Schumann's Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 54 outstandingly. His technical virtuosity and emotional grasp of the work were abundantly apparent as he kept the audience on the edge of their chairs.

Schumann's concerto originally appeared in three parts, each movement written at different times. He wanted to write a concerto in which the soloist "may unfold the substance of his instrument and the orchestra, no longer a mere background, may interweave its manifold factors into the scene."

Deveau brought energy and tremendous talent in a difficult piece. Nevertheless, the orchestra was not overshadowed, and rose to the occasion. I had never enjoyed Schumann quite so much before.

The Pro Arte's next performance will be at the Sanders Theater on Sunday Feb. 24 at 3 pm. Their tribute to Parvisian composers will include Haydn's Symphony No. 82 in C, ("Town") and Ravel's Piano Concerto in G. Tickets are $10, and can be reserved by calling 661-7067.

Scott I. Chase