STOLTZMAN AT GREAT WOODS

Richard Stoltzman playing Mozart's "Clarinet Concerto." With the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Leonard Slatkin. At Great Woods, August 1.

MIT SUMMER CHAMBER MUSIC


By JONATHAN RICHMOND

As the crew on both Mozart's mental and physical states were on the decline, he had returned exhausted and disappointed from Prague, where his "La Clemenza di Tito" had been a failure. He was in debt and his begging letters to friends had become a matter of routine. His correspondence had lost the sense of humor, for which Mozart was noted until near the end. It was only in his music that he conquered loneliness and despair, producing in his darkest moments perhaps his greatest ever concerto, the "Clarinet Concerto in A, K. 622."

"K. 622" is a work of exquisite gentleness. The clarinet part is uncomplicated and lacking in ostentation. Freed of surface hyperbole, the soloist is invited to look inward and produce tones of sublime pathos. There is no one better equipped to do this than Mozart's clarinettist Richard Stoltzman. Clarinetist Richard Stoltzman, a veteran of unassuming modesty who, unlike so many other soloists, directs the listener to engage with the music rather than with himself.

At Great Woods, on August 1, he provided the definitive account of this work. Stoltzman made it clear from the start that he was embarking on a journey of unadulterated candor; his music flowed without any apparent effort and with a disarming simplicity. Every register of the clarinet's expressive potential, every slight change of pace, or passing nuance, phrased to draw colors of deep, full-bodied hues.

"Un poco amano" from "Così fan tutte," like the "Clarinet Concerto," is in A and Stoltzman's dreamy first movement suggested obvious connections. In Ferrando's amorous aria, he sings warily of "A breach of love from one of our beloveds." Stoltzman's clarinet presented similar hopeful thoughts during the Allegro, just as "save," in its core, is a prayer for release from loneliness. Stoltzman's clarinet tipped the movement with tones of melancholy, dressed though they may have been in the disguise of joy.

Stoltzman's Adagio was arresting. A dance in sadness, its message was contemplative, thoughtful, but never bitter. Slatkin's orchestra provided a soft, evocative accompaniment of supportive and uplifting dimensions.

For the finale, Stoltzman gave us a peck at the child that perhaps never left Mozart. Forgetting all cares, the clarinet's steps on the dance-floor of the mind became unapologetically ebullient, the bubbling joy transporting everyone present to Mozart heaven.

A SUMMER'S EVENT which must not go without mention is the July 15 concert of the MIT Community Summer Chamber Music series. Two of the pieces on the evening's program were notable short of revelation.

The first was excerpts from Alessandro Scarlatti's "Su le Sponde del Tebro," sung by Kathleen J. Allen. The remarkably talented Allen — at once soprano, MIT piano tuner, and student in the Department of Physics — has developed her coloratura to an even finer standard than previously. Her clarity and precision are of the type that small gazettes on advertisements for stereo equipment, while the expressive use to which she puts this videlicet weapon is phenomenal. The rarely heard Scarlatti was thus brought to life and made to sparkle, reflect, and, above all, please.

The concert closed with Ernest Chausson's "Piano Trio in G minor, Op. 3." It presented a showcase of MIT chamber playing at its very best. The beautiful, rich cello tone of Paula Osofsky '86, the rippling piano of Monty McGovern '82, and the romantic violin of Barbara Hughey '85 which together in sublime harmony. The performance was intimate, involved, and supremely musical.

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