Student Chamber Music Society requires no indulgence

MIT CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY
Killian Hall. Friday, December 11.

By DAVID M. J. SASLAV

When attending student chamber recitals, one rarely allows oneself to expect too much, even at the more prestigious local conservatories. Instead, one tends to listen rather indulgently, readying oneself to make numerous allowances for underprepared ensemble, articulation errors, and lack of overall performance perspective.

The young women and men who performed under the auspices of the MIT Chamber Music Society on December 11, however, required little or no such indulgence. Four undergraduates, two graduate students, and one spouse, all demonstrating the admirable tutelage of Marcus Thompson (for course 21.655 - Chamber Music Society), performed the Dvorák F Major String Quartet impressively, and Tchaikovsky's Piano Trio in A Minor superbly.

If one is fortunate, one learns (and loves) the music of Tchaikovsky intimately at a young age; his repertoire constitutes a veritable trove of precious imagery, intense passion, and unbridled desire. At its best, Tchaikovsky wrote with sheer simplicity; surely no composers (save perhaps Bach and Mozart) ever used simple scalewise motion and arpeggiation to better thematic effect than he.

And the three players who executed the exemplary Piano Trio in A on this occasion did so with outstanding articulation, expression, and overall synergy. No student group in recent memory has demonstrated such a deep conceptual grasp of Tchaikovsky's essential Romanticism. The three players succeeded in transcending the mundane (and the poor acoustics), gently pulling the audience out of the provided chairs, and into a higher sublimity.

Barbara Hughery Beckwitt G, violin, performed at a level which can only be called professional. Robert Beckwitt executed a smooth virtuoso piano performance that can only be described as masterful. And the mature, sensitive cello performance of Joyce Wong '88 would have been noteworthy for no other reason than her youth; however, the vitality of her play and mastery of her interpretive skill commanded praise on a scale independent of age. The shouts of "Bravo!" and the half dozen curtain calls these three received was well deserved. Look for and attend any future chamber recitals given by any of these remarkable young musicians.

The evening, advertised in both campus papers only as a performance of the Tchaikovsky, began with a startlingly competent rendition of Dvorák's beautiful "American" Quartet. Written in honor of the country he loved shortly after emigrating here, this work's wistfully arching melodies and lovingly crafted harmonies constitute a rather full plate for any string ensemble. The poor acoustical setting provided by the new Killian Hall performance space makes the task of pure string performance no easier.

Nevertheless, David Wootten G, first violin, Albert Lew '91, second violin, Richard Olson '91, viola, and Sam Osofsky '88, cello, overcame the obstacles with flourish, particularly in the Finale; each came off as a highly serious and talented young musician. Their comprehension of form was quite sound; for example, every recapitulation was carefully set up and artfully arrived at. The group's tone color, while not exactly uniform throughout the work, at times achieved sublime heights, particularly in the third and fourth movements.

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