The Arts

Roy Goodman’s Hanover Band performs masterfully

CONDUCTED BY ROY GOODMAN
Program of works by Haydn, Mozart, Mendelssohn, and Le Brun.
Sanders Theatre, November 4.

By Jonathan Richmond, critic-at-large

With the dance of the Blessed Spirits from Gluck’s Orfeo, Roy Goodman took The Hanover Band’s Sanders Theatre concert to a sublime conclusion. It had generally been a rich and involving evening, but the eloquence of Rachel Brown’s woodsy-sounding but free-flowing flute playing and the gentleness of the accompanying strings made this encore the highlight.

The Hanover Band is an original instrument orchestra from London, and they were performing in a new series promoted by the Sanders Theatre. The attendance was depressingly low, and few young people were present, indicative of a need for better marketing and more competitive pricing. With the cheapest price at $19.95, and no discounts for non-Harvard students, this was too expensive for a Wednesday night.

Haydn’s Symphony No. 75 in D opened the concert, and was given an excellent performance. Shadows of darkness were at times poignantly enveloped in the sun of Haydn’s symphonic composing, but this was mostly a ticklish display of pure enjoyment.

Rachel Brown’s delightful, chirpy playing also displayed elements of beauty and soul during the Mozart Flute Concerto in G, K. 313. Her sound was well balanced by a silky backdrop of strings, and the crisp tinkling sound of Roy Goodman’s harpsichord continued to give an added piquancy to the blend.

There was some messiness in Mendelssohn’s String Symphony No. 10 in B Minor, which did not sound quite adequately rehearsed, but the Le Brun Oboe Concerto in C which followed made up for this. This is no great work, but Frank de Bruine’s playful solo performance brought many smiles, his playing evoking images of some mischievous Rosenmaler heroine.

Mozart’s Symphony No. 29 is one of those works which can appear in different costumes and look astonishing in each one. The traditional approach takes the work at a slow pace, and can create a real sense of power and pathos if done well.

The "authentic" movement takes things at a far brisker swing, and Roy Goodman and his crew were certainly true to this newer tradition. They created a masterpiece of youth/abandonment and sensuality within a framework of Mozartean Classicism and elegance. The clarity of the wind playing was penetrating, crispely differentiated, but it engaged quite evocatively with a set of strings engorged in the spirit of the dance.

Roy Goodman earned a lone black mark when he referred to the sponsor of the Le Brun work. "I'm typical Dutch fashion, he only paid half the fee... perhaps that's where the saying "Going Dutch" came from," said Goodman in introducing the work. Such bigoted comments have no place on the concert platform or anywhere else.

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