Yap shines in concert

By Anne Wall

Saturday night a Symphony Hall Gala Concert and Art Exhibit marked the opening of First Expressions, a non-profit gallery for student arts. The organization aims to promote fine student artists from the Boston area’s colleges and universities by offering gallery space and performance opportunities. First Expressions also plans to sponsor educational programs concerning AIDS/HIV issues. Net proceeds from the gallery will be donated to the Children’s Hospital AIDS program.

The event began with the opening of a gallery of student art and a reception hosted by Kitty and Michael Dukakis. The exhibit included artwork from several MIT students, as well as students from Emmanuel College, Northeastern University, DeCordova Museum School of Arts, The School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Massachusetts College of Art, University of Massachusetts, Boston, and Art Institute of Boston. Each school will also be featured in a 6-week gallery exhibition series than runs through next August.

All of the pieces were for sale, but don’t rush out to buy them. The prices were $500 and up and did not seem to reflect the value of the art. Most of the art was clearly student work and seemed less than artistic. MIT students were sensitive enough to list “price on request.” A favorite of mine was Saul Gonzalez’s “The Real Reason Why Giant Tulips Became Extinct,” which showed a dinosaur hungrily eyeing a giant tulip. MIT art students will have another opportunity to exhibit their work at the First Expressions gallery from Nov. 29 to Jan.

The concert program featured students from New England Conservatory, MIT, Tufts, and Harvard universities. The first performer was Jeffrey Work, trumpet, with pianist Michael Evansorn, both Artist Diploma candidates at NEC. They performed four pieces put together, ranging from baroque to 20th century and ending with a flashy showpiece. While Mr. Work demonstrated a beautiful sound and good command of the instrument, he did not display much variety of style and character in the music, making for a rather unrewarding performance. Probably a good decision for him to go back to school for the Artist Diploma and seek further guidance.

The next performance was by the Jackson Quintet, both Artist Diploma candidates at MIT, whose sensitive musicianship and fluid technique in her performance of the famous Liszt Sonata in B minor brought her an enthusiastic standing ovation. She had a clear understanding of the intricate form of the piece and her performance was captivating from beginning to end. Few people have the stage presence and musical charm to hold an audience’s attention through a complicated half-hour piece, and Ms. Yap is lucky to be one of them. Don’t miss an opportunity to hear her perform.

The final performance of the evening was by the Harvard’s Linnaen String Quartet. They performed Ravel’s colorful String Quartet in F with grace and strong ensemble playing. They are now juniors and have been playing together since their first year at Harvard. They plan to stay together until they graduate, so we should look forward to future performances.

In the end, First Expressions seems to be an organization taking a good direction. Are they trying to help young would-be professional artists and musicians get started, or are they just showcasing local college students in a talent show type arena? If it has been created to promote young artists and musicians, then the profits should go towards furthering this goal. The money could be put towards scholarships and sponsoring more recitals and performances. Musicians of the highest level should be sought and carefully selected. Perhaps it would be good to promote more students who intend to become professional musicians, as these type of performing opportunities would be quite valuable to their careers.

The highlight of the evening was undoubtedly pianist Hee-Hoon Yap from MIT, whose sensitive musicianship and fluid technique in her performance of the famous Liszt Sonata in B minor brought her an enthusiastic standing ovation. She had a clear understanding of the intricate form of the piece and her performance was captivating from beginning to end. Few people have the stage presence and musical charm to hold an audience’s attention through a complicated half-hour piece, and Ms. Yap is lucky to be one of them. Don’t miss an opportunity to hear her perform.

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