The Handel and Haydn Society made a charming opening of their 1994-95 season with special programs and performances especially dedicated to Mozart. The so-called "Mozart Weekend" included seminars and informal discussions that allowed audiences to explore the artistic side of the composer, as well as concerts featuring the master's unfinished works.

The weekend opened with a Symphony Series Concert of orchestral music, featuring noted Mozart scholar and virtuoso fortepianist Robert Levin. Levin definitely possesses a deep and experienced insight on Mozart's style. He has been praised throughout the United States and Europe for his imaginative performances at the keyboard. He deserves most of the credit for his brilliant improvisations in the style of Mozart, and for his appealing, imaginative completion of many pieces the master left unfinished. Robert Levin's performances, both in recital and with major orchestras such as Montreal, Chicago, and Boston Symphony, have proved his dazzling talent and for his appeal to an original replicate of a Basset Clarinet being used by a contemporary chamber music group.

Robert Levin returned to stage before the intermission, continuing to give historical references and demonstrating some relevant characteristics of Mozart's style. He then played the well-known piano sonata, Fantasia in D Major. I must confess that his interpretation of the sonata was far more than what "beautiful" could denote for, it was indeed enchanting. It is interesting enough to note here that at whatever time and for whatever reason, Mozart did not bring this piece to completion; he apparently stopped just short of providing an ending. The work has become known in a version that has 10 measures added on at the end, probably written by August Eberhard Müller, but many pianists have chosen to ignore that option and round out the piece with a reprise of the opening material.

I must say that I felt both joy and regret overwhelming me as I left Sanders Theater. I was joyful, having experienced the most professional approach to a composer I deeply respect, and I was regretful for having missed the previous appearances by Handel & Haydn Society. For those who evaluate groups by their history, I could say that H&H, founded in 1815, is the oldest continuously performing arts organization in the United States, and from its start has stood at the forefront of classical music. The group is currently under the artistic direction of distinguished composer and director Christopher Hogwood.

The Handel & Haydn Society's next appearance will take place at Jordan Theater on Friday, Dec. 16 and at Sanders Theater on Monday, Dec. 19. The program, called Baroque Noel, will include the Christmas Concerto by Corelli; Magnificat, Gloria by Vivaldi and motets by Palestrina, Gabrieli and Monteverdi. This is the chance for music lovers who are looking for a brand-spanking new episode of Mystery Science Theater 3000, movies to pieces. Stranded in space, a guy and two robots sit through really bad movies and make wisecracks. See it now before it spoils.

Thursday, October 27 at 8:00 PM
Room 10250
Presented by the MIT Lecture Series Committee
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