

Concert Review—

Soloists – Alone And As A Group – Performed
An Entertaining, Diverse Program

By JUNE APRIL

In the many years of experiencing concerts sponsored Newtown Friends of Music, this reviewer cannot recall a more varied program than the one presented last Sunday afternoon at Edmond Town Hall. The New York Chamber Soloists is a most interesting group because this not only a group of fine musicians with a large and diverse repertoire, but the flexibility in which group of instruments are used is also quite intriguing. For the February 9 concert in Newtown the group opted to go with four wind instrumentalists; bassoon, clarinet, flute and oboe came from New York City to perform.

The Soloists opened the February 9 program with an absolutely charming work, Mozart's *Divertimento No. 4 in B-flat Major, K. 496b*, one could not help but be captivated by

the technical expertise of founder Melvin Kaplan's oboe performance, the perfect tones created by bassoonist Andrew Schwartz, or Allen Blustine's velvet clarinet skills.

Interesting information about the music or its composer was peppered throughout the program and added to the appreciation of what was being heard.

Flutist David Fedele joined Mr Blustine for Brazilian composer Hector Villa-Lobos' *Chorus No 2 for Flute and Clarinet*. The rhythmic magnetism was captivating and had that pulsating character that marks Villa-Lobos' compositions.

The range of mood and melodic variation of Igor Stravinsky's *Three Pieces for Solo Clarinet* began with a very brief rather sad spirit. The second piece sounded much like a host of bird calls, while the final short work recalled a mixture of jazz, ragtime and Latin beat and ended with a smile-provoking grace note.

The remainder of the program had a French stamp on it: either the composer was from that country or had been a student of the famous French composer-piano teacher-conductor Nadia Boulanger. Walter Piston (whose writings on harmony and music theory are still used in music classes today) and Arthur Berger both studied

under Boulanger and continued in her tradition of teaching their love and knowledge of music.

Piston's *Three Pieces for Flute, Clarinet, and Bassoon* continued the afternoon's program, as did Berger's composition *Quartet in C Major for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet and Bassoon*, which offered a degree of contrast between the three movements.

Darius Milaud's *Suite d'apres Corrette Opus 161b for Oboe, Clarinet and Bassoon* had eight quite different segments – "Entre et Rondeau," "Tambourin," "Musette," "Serenade," "Fanfare," "Rondeau," "Menuet" and "Le Coucou." Meter varied as did the nature of each of these, with the final piece heralding the cuckoo bird.

Sharing the tale of the nymph Syrinx, David Fedele preceded his solo performance Debussy's work of the same name by explaining that basically it's the story of how the God Pan pursued this lovely spirit and in order to protect her or put a kybosh on the potential relationship, the Greek gods changed her into reed plants. Pan gathered them up and created the instrument (syrinx is the Greek word for panpipes) which bring such a lovely, melancholy tone to the musical world. Mr Fedele's performance shimmered.

The afternoon's final presentation, a piece created by Jean Francaix, once involved all four musicians. Now in his early 90's the composer is still writing music, and this one conjured images of ballet dancers in this reviewer's mind. Actually, each movement conjured different mental pictures. The "Allegro molto" was especially delightful and felt like bubbles appearing and bursting, while the Allegro vivo recalled a gossiping/chit-chatting circle of women. Overall there was a jocular quality to this wonderful piece of music.

The range of Mozart to modern music did not cause anyone to leave after intermission and that is because of the educational and expertise of the four gentlemen on stage. The New York Chamber Soloists brought joy and warmth to an otherwise cold afternoon.