

# Calm exterior hid extraordinary skills

By Avigdor Zaromp  
special writer

The roads to artistic integrity are many, although finding one can be most challenging. It is even more challenging to get universal recognition for such an undertaking.

One of the successful groups in this regard is the Gabriel String Quartet. Founded in England 18 years ago and it is now recognized as one of that country's leading ensembles.

Its members, violinists Kenneth Sillitoe and Brendan O'Reilly, violist Ian Jewel and cellist Keith Harvey have toured Europe, as well as Australia and South America. This is their fourth tour of this country. They appeared at Or-

chestra Hall last week, as a part of the Chamber Music Society of Detroit (CMS).

The three works featured were by Mozart, Britten and Dvorak. These represent three different styles and periods. They were all presented with an extremely high level of artistic integrity.

The quartet's style is reserved and unpretentious. This isn't the same as being timid and overly cautious. For the most part, the technical flashes and the kind of wildly daring feats that attract attention were hardly noticeable. The body movements were minimal, there was none of that prancing around.

Yet, behind that calm and casual ap-



Avigdor Zaromp

pearance, there was a degree of skill and artistic integrity that few groups can equal.

THE CLEAN sound and perfect coordination appeared as a natural byproduct of their style, rather than something deliberately rigged to elicit feelings of awe and admiration. There was the feeling that the music was al-

lowed to speak on its own terms, by unfolding its intrinsic treasures.

Mozart's Quartet No. 17 offered more than the pleasant Mozartian themes. His style was there, of course, but the listener was left with the impression that Mozart's music was presented without any subjective interference.

Of course, such a performance would be impossible without any subjective input on the part of the performers, but it was a rare example of the artists serving the need of the music.

The Quartet No. 3 by Britten, one of his last works, is seldom performed and not well known. It is more harsh and dissonant than many other works by Britten, who was known for his relatively tame and tonal style.

IT REQUIRES high technical skill, including unusual bowings and daring glissandos.

This was the one work in which the performers seemed less reserved. Even if one doesn't appreciate all of its movements, this performance left no doubt of its masterful, artistic design.

Dvorak is regarded a second-rate composer compared to the top German masters. While in terms of his symphonic output this designation may be justified, his chamber music is most significant.

This was made even more pronounced with this performance of his Quartet No. 10 in E Flat Major, Op. 91. While the performers seemed reserved as with the Mozart, the Slavonic themes emanated uninhibited.

This sound didn't come as a result of impassioned fiddling and intense, deliberate gimmick to produce it. It was there for the asking, but it takes a group of the artistic integrity of the Gabriel to let it through undistorted.

# Herbig conducts 3 Bs in significant concert

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The three Bs are the center of gravity of classical music. Some might even refer to them as the "meat and potatoes" of music, in a manner that isn't always complimentary.

In some sense, they resemble the tonic triad — this is almost always the beginning and the end of any movement written in tonal style. By extending this analogy, a movement consisting solely of tonic triads and arpeggios to the exclusion of all other harmonies wouldn't be very interesting. But a movement without it is inconceivable to most except for the more ardent proponents of atonality.

Last week the Detroit Symphony Orchestra struck its tonic chord under the direction of Music Director Gunther Herbig. He will be here through the rest of the season.

The program consisted of the Orchestral Suite No. 1 by Bach, the Piano Concerto No. 2 by Beethoven and the Symphony No. 4 by Brahms.

This was, indeed, a natural progression (with the numbers forming a geometric progression). The fact that a work by Bach

was included coincided with the hoopla about Bach's 300th birthday celebration.

The performance made clear — what has been already established before — that Maestro Herbig is well versed in the works of these German masters.

HIS IS more than familiarity, one doesn't need to be a major orchestra conductor for that, but he has the rare ability to project these familiar works with their natural, authentic environment without resorting to eccentric dramatization.

The Orchestral Suite No. 1 was a rare sample of good Bach. The French overture had the right tempo — a slow introduc-

tion with fast but not rushed fugue.

The sound of the small orchestra was clearly defined and the winds — played by oboists Donald Baker and John Soow and bassoon player Robert Williams — sprinkled the movements with delightful colors.

Some of the tempos in others were less to my liking. I would have preferred the Courante and Gavottes at a slower pace and the concluding Passepieds at a faster one, but there was no compromise in accuracy and balance.

Pianist Emanuel Ax rendered an extremely pleasing performance of the Beethoven concerto. This is actually the first composed even though published as No. 2, is still Mozartian in nature, with some hints of Beethoven's developing style.

ACCORDINGLY, Ax wasn't heavy handed, but brought out the themes with sharp clarity. There was no attempt to force the style of the Emperor concerto on this work, as is frequently the case.

There was also good cooperation between orchestra and soloist, as exemplified by the limely orchestral chord at the end of a fast scale in the conclusion of the cadenza.

The Brahms symphony was equally effective, with its stylistic landmarks. The intense peaks were gradually built and naturally achieved, with brass sound that was through, but not harsh or distorted.

The final movement, which is in a form of a chaconne (a fact that isn't known to many listeners) was an appropriate link to the past — to Bach and his contemporaries.

When the final chords of this movement were over, one could feel again the significance of this profound triad of classical music — Bach, Beethoven, Brahms. This is a sense of harmony that makes other styles meaningful.

Five music students who won Birmingham Musicals scholarships will perform for the Musicals program at 1 p.m. Thursday, April 4 at The Community House, 380 S. Bates, Birmingham.

The student winners are: Kirsten Agresta, harp, 10th grade, Seaholm High School; Scott Holden, piano, 8th grade, East Hills Middle School; Liesel Brand, piano, 12th grade, Seaholm High School; Jennifer Price, piano, flute, 9th grade, Malow Junior High; Frank Hsu, 10th grade, Lahser High School.

The program with the theme, "New Horizons," will include piano selections by Sheila Stephenson and vocal selections by Sara Dalglish Chason, soprano; Martha Welton will accompany Chason.

Stephenson, who teaches in Birmingham, has a bachelor's degree in music from Julliard and a master's degree in

music from Oakland University.

Chason has a bachelor's degree in psychology from Brown University and a degree in vocal performance from University of Michigan. She is a member of the Kenneth Jewell Choral and sings with Kirk in the Hills Choir, Michigan Opera Theater, has had leads in many local opera productions. She is also a music therapist at Beaumont Hospital.

The Birmingham Musicals Women's Chorus, under the direction of Maureen Kennedy, will include "Hater" by Pergolesi and "Missa Hosanna" by Noel Geomanne.

Phoebe DeGraff is chairman of the day.

Birmingham Musicals programs are presented with the support of Michigan Council for the Arts. For information, call Pat Mills, president, 6585-0666 or Charlotte Ruppel, membership, 642-7940.

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