

Concert promotes artistic expression of Vivaldi

By Avigdor Zoromp
Special writer

Until the last two weeks, an all-Vivaldi program meant to me an event of continuous redundant monotony. To attend two such events in a row was utterly unthinkable.

The Chamberworks series turned such a perceived horror into events that were not only informative, but surprisingly fulfilling musically and artistically. The second of two programs featuring the 12 concerti from Op. 3, "L'estro Armonico," was given at Christ Church Cranbrook on Sunday afternoon.

Several of the works in the series have been rearranged by Bach. For



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Vivaldi fans, this is an indication of the deep respect that Bach had felt toward the Venetian master. My own witty reaction was that Bach was merely attempting to teach Vivaldi how to write, after finding the grossly imperfect original too hard to swallow.

MUCH OF VIVALDI'S music

tends to sound the same, to the casual listener of a casual performance. It is analogous to insects of the same species that look alike unless examined under a microscope.

This undertaking by Chamberworks did more than provide a musical microscope to discern the different characters of these undervalued Vivaldi concerti. It also demonstrated that, far from being analogous to insects, these works represent rather advanced and intricate life forms. Many recorded versions of such

works tend to suffer from two extremes. For the more-celebrated violinists and their expensive instruments, the Baroque repertoire is only a short and temporary diversion from the material that they do best.

At the other extreme are the advocates of "period instruments," together with some misbegotten conceptions on the alleged performing style, an approach that is thorough in its attempt to have the music be devoid of any possible joy and artistic appeal.

It is rare, indeed, that this music is approached with a combination of knowledge and attitude that promotes the artistic expression.

SOME OF THE harmonies of Vivaldi, when taken at face value, may be monotonous and repetitive in

themselves. But with the proper attention to the fine shades and nuances, they can sound as varied as the most daring modulations. The shimmering variety of the four solo instruments in the Largo movement of No. 10 would be a case in point.

In some other instances, Vivaldi demonstrated conclusively that he was capable of modulations and credible fugues. One of his best fugues appears in No. 11, which Bach arranged for the organ, and which sounds so Bach-like in that arrangement.

French dance forms in No. 7 are another aspect that one would seldom associate with Vivaldi. Each one of these performances emerged

as a fully breathing organism. Bach's arrangement for No. 10, four harpsichords, is the more frequently performed version of this concerto. With my acknowledged pro-Bach bias, I still like that version better. But Vivaldi's original version for four violins stood tall in this performance.

Thomas Kuras, artistic director of the series, who conducted these works from the harpsichord, has the kind and depth of knowledge of this period and its music that none of the more celebrated virtuosic artists could ever hope to possess. This event has demonstrated that such knowledge can make all the difference in the world.

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