

The Catskill Chronicle

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WCM's Duo Violin Concert in North Branch – 7/22/10

By Barry Plaxen



During its Summer Music Festivals, Weekend of Chamber Music (WCM) offers what artistic director, Judith Pearce, has titled “Music Talks!” This year’s event was held in the charming and cozy North Branch Inn on Thursday, July 22, to a packed house (no-room-at-the-Inn).

Duo violinists Nurit Pacht (left) and Yuval Waldman (below) offered up a concoction perfectly aligned with the WCM 2010 theme, “Chaos, Color and Contrast.”

Their program opened with a sonata by Jean-Marie Leclair (1697-1764), obviously chosen for the many contrasting colors this Baroque composer offers, certainly more color and contrast to my ears than his French contemporaries. (An interesting aside: Jean-Marie Leclair was fatally stabbed in the back. He was so isolated from the world that he was not found until two months later, lying on the floor in his room, still clutching to his chest what he had held most dear: his red Stradivarius. His right hand stiffened against the violin, Leclair had left on its surface an indelible dark stain that would always mark this prized violin.)

Pacht was joined by guitarist Rami Vamos for a lovely lyrical short piece, “Cantabile,” by Niccolò Paganini, who is well known for his violin/guitar sonatas and pieces, just before Pacht and Waldman performed and spoke about the main event of the evening, 10 of Bela Bartok’s 44 violin duets.

Bartok’s duo violin pieces, all with provocative titles and fascinatingly honed from Rumanian and Hungarian folk music and embellished with a variety of colors and contrasting musical ideas, were amazing in that they were written for “early” students of the instrument, but were quite complicated and extremely moving. It is amazing what this genius could do rhythmically, harmonically and melodically with just two voices.

All the music was played by the three virtuosos so excitingly that the somewhat short program could have gone on for a while longer, as far



as I was concerned. As noted in all my previous (and future) reviews of WCM programs, Pearce offers her audiences nothing less than world class musicians.

The Bartok duos were not the only pieces that were deeply felt by the audience. Waldman is also a conductor and a composer, and the second piece on the program was his very personal composition, "Fantasy on Jerusalem of Gold," a piece he wrote when asked to perform Jewish music in the mostly-Islamic country of Kazakhstan, just after the city of Jerusalem was united in the late 60s. For him, this unification was a very joyous occurrence, and in a very interesting dream he had in which "ghosts" of all religions came to him (I am paraphrasing) in brotherhood, he melded his deeply profound feelings about the unification and the experiencing of the "ghosts" into the piece with the hopes of bringing about peace on earth.

From his pen to.....