

**Concert review: Weekend of Chamber Music:
'Beethoven & the Americans'**

By Marcus Kalipolites
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Jeffersonville — Every once in a while there comes along a concert that is infectious for both musicians and concertgoers. Such was the case Saturday night July 14 at the spacious and acoustically sound performance hall of Eddie Adams Barn, where artistic director Judith Pearce brought 11 world-class musicians together for a memorable presentation.

Featured in the Weekend of Chamber Music program were two Beethoven chamber works as well as the premiere performance of "Last Letter Home," a posthumously revealed letter from a soldier in Iraq set to music by Lee Holby. Rounding out the concert was a novel piano piece by Charles Ives.

From the opening movement of Quintet in E-flat major, Op. 16, by Beethoven, it was clear that the ensemble of oboist Matt Sullivan, clarinetist Marianne Gythfeldt, French hornist Daniel Grabois, bassoonist Robert Wagner and pianist Tannis Gibson was something special. Sensitive to nuances and gracious in technique, all five players went beyond finesse to extracting a higher level of musical consciousness that was effectively conveyed to the audience.

This mindset continued in the following "Andante cantabile" as Ms. Gibson, at the beginning of the movement, crafted a piano solo that was lyric in mood and delicate in technique.

Now, for the following piece and in a wholly different and expansive mood, pianist Gibson as soloist not only performed "The Celestial Railroad" but she also explained early on and in great detail the many programmatic effects that Ives had included. And indeed, as she performed this captivating work of bell sounds, rambling wheels on tracks (with strong left hand), changing tempi and even snippets of other tunes that Ives was wont to use in his compositions, the performer revealed impressive instrumental storytelling as she modulated the changing episodes of travel all the way to a slowing-down and softer-playing arrival at the station.

There was no mistaking that in all aspects of performing this challenging work, Gibson's interpretation and technique could not have been better.

From novelty, the program took on the somber testament of Jesse Givens who, before dying in Iraq four years ago, had written a "only if I should die" letter to his family. The deeply moving music by Holby was performed by the composer, at the piano, and David Trombley, whose expressive baritone voice added the right measure of nobility to a piece which warrants a place in history for the prescient soldier.

After intermission, wind players Gythfeldt, Grabois and Robert Wagner were joined by violinist Mark Rush, violist Sunghae Anna Lim, cellist Nancy Green and bassist Roger Wagner in Beethoven's Septet in E-flat major, Opus 20, a multifaceted work in six movements. Especially impressive was the second, in which the clarinetist emoted on the ballad melody and the hornist soared with rich tones. And while violinist Rush shared the spotlight in this "Adagio cantabile" section, it was in the final movement that he displayed superlative and virtuoso handling of a tour-de-force solo and cadenza.

The two-week festival continues through Sunday.

If you go ...

What: Weekend of Chamber Music concerts

- "Cafe Concert With Panache!," 6 p.m. July 17, Hill's Country Inn, Callicoon Center, \$55, reservations required
- "At Work & Play Behind the Notes," 7 p.m. July 20, Adams Farm, Jeffersonville, free, donations accepted
- "Schubert & the Americans," 8 p.m. July 21, Adams Farm, Jeffersonville, \$25
- Collaboration with NACL: on "Carnival of the Animals," 3 p.m. July 22, Adams Farm, Jeffersonville, \$10 adults, free for children

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