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June 18-24, 2010

Music camp prepares for final violin concerts

by Bill Haxton

The Center Stage Strings Concert Series continues this week with three more exceptional events, all at the Community Presbyterian Church.

Today (Friday, June 18) at 4 p.m., world-renowned master teacher Robert Lipsett will present a Master Class to four extraordinary violinists. The Master Class performance is free and open to the public. If you have never attended a Master Class, and you have an interest in what it takes to make a good violinist great, this opportunity should not be missed.

Saturday, June 19 at 7 p.m., award-winning violinist Danielle Belen teams with cello phenomenon Diego Miralles and extraordinary pianist Jennie Jung to perform Brahms, Beethoven, and Schoenfield. Here are the music notes for Saturday's concert:

Piano Trio no.1 in B major Op.8
Johannes Brahms(1833-1897)

For most of his life Brahms suffered from periodic episodes of extreme insecurity. In the grip of those dark spells, he burned many of his compositions, believing they didn't measure up. Somehow, this piano trio survived even though it was criticized when first published in 1854. But the 1888 revision is magnificent. In the Allegro, solo piano states the nostalgic main theme, then the cello develops it beautifully, and when the violin enters the music simply soars. From here, Brahms introduces new themes and emotions, but always returns to the warmth and calm of the main theme. The Scherzo begins on a skipping, tentative note, becomes positively exuberant, then expands the pleasant nostalgia of the Allegro. The Adagio is deep and reflective. Patiently advancing piano chords lead an almost vocal, singing violin toward the warm voice of the cello, now profound and serene. The



Sound of Music: Will Hagen, 17, brought his violin to life at the inaugural Center Stage Strings Concert on Tuesday, June 15. Three more concerts are planned this weekend.

-- Photo courtesy of Geoffrey Glass

Allegro last movement continues the expansion, and at the risk of overusing the analogy, it's effect is strikingly similar to a powerful Shakespearean soliloquy.

Piano Trio No. 5 in D major, Op. 70 "Ghost" Ludwig van Beethoven

Classical music can tolerate big mood shifts within the same composition, and no composer was moodier than Beethoven, so much so that he often seems to be doing battle with himself. That's certainly true in this piece, especially the Allegro first movement which opens with fist-shaking defiance, then immediately becomes quietly euphoric before whirling back and forth between these moods as if trying to work them out. The Largo gave the composition its name, "Ghost," because of its ethereal, spectral mood. The movement is like a dirge, occasionally punctuated by the discordance of overpowering grief. The Presto is about as distant from the Largo on the moodswing scale as you can get—frivolous, celebratory, joking. You can almost hear Beethoven having a belly laugh across the centuries at the contortions he forces on musicians as they work to come together at the close.

Cafe Music for Piano Trio Paul Schoenfield (b. 1947)

Infectiously enjoyable, over-caffienated, whimsical, rollicking, good humored. But Schoenfield's own words tell it best. "My intention was to write a kind of high class dinner music which could, just barely, find its way into a concert hall." The work draws on early 20th Century American jazz, Viennese, light classical, gypsy and Broadway.

On Sunday, June 19, the Finale Concert begins at 5 p.m. This is where every musician who attended the Music Camp performs, some as soloists, some in small chamber groups. It's pure celebration, and it's a chance for all of us to get an advance peek at the next generation of great violinists.

Immediately afterward, Center Stage Strings and the Three Rivers Performing Arts Institute will host a one-hour reception open to everyone at Harrison Hall on the church grounds. All of the performers will be there, and it will be a great opportunity to meet them.

Bill Haxton is a resident of Three Rivers and principal in the newly formed Three Rivers Performing Arts Institute.