

RRCMS ends season with three quintets (May 17)

by Jarrett Hoffman



The Rocky River Chamber Music Society's live-streamed 62nd season came to a rousing conclusion on Monday, May 17, when five wind players and a pianist came together around quintets by masters of old and new.

Anton Reicha's 24 woodwind quintets don't have the most exciting reputation, but his Op. 88 in E-flat is superb: beautiful, varied, and in the right hands, compellingly picturesque. Those right hands (and left ones too) were those of flutist Mary Kay Fink, oboist Frank Rosenwein, clarinetist Robert Woolfrey, hornist Richard King, and bassoonist Barrick Stees, who together gave a first-rate performance, both deeply polished and deeply fun.

A sense of luxury emanated from the ensemble during the silky-smooth second movement. It seemed that at any moment, the doors to West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church might open, and you wouldn't even have to turn your head to know that royalty had arrived.

Several solos highlighted the third movement, beginning with Rosenwein's introduction, full of expressive shading and capped off by subtle rubato. Later on, Fink brought flair and flavor to a scherzo-like passage, and King matched his surname with golden-hued tone during his own turn in the spotlight.

Given the party-like atmosphere in the finale, from Stees' indefatigable articulation to Woolfrey's rocket-like technique, you were only waiting for someone to kill the lights.



Beethoven's Op. 16 in E-flat is also a quintet, but one that calls for a different instrumental lineup, with piano (Christina Dahl) replacing flute. Throughout, Dahl's ability to make technical runs sound gestural and easy was highly impressive, as was her elegant lyricism. And despite the change of setup and personnel, the ensemble remained keenly interconnected in musical conversation. The only complaints were some lapses of intonation, and the composer's tendency here for length and repetition.

Reicha and Beethoven were contemporaries, but Valerie Coleman's *Tzigane* for wind quintet moved the program forward by about 200 years. The sudden shift in style brought both a wonderful contrast and a bit of disjointedness to the evening, but more importantly, what an excellent performance of an excellent piece. From one alluring solo and one juicy harmony to the next, moments to wow you were not in short supply. A gleaming note in the stratosphere of the clarinet brought down the curtain.

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