

Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players

“...top notch”

The London Times
January 30, 2004

In New York, often the liveliest concerts happen in unexpected places, while more illustrious venues seem a little staid. That was perfectly demonstrated by two other concerts last week. One, a disappointingly lacklustre affair, was the first of four programmes called Sound Investment in which the awesomely grand Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Centre is patting itself on the back for notching up 35 years of commissions.

Well, congratulations to them for supporting 94 living composers -- but what an unsatisfactory way to celebrate. Instead of selecting, say, the best dozen works, the society asked composers to cut their original scores to eight minutes maximum, so that no fewer than 43 could be squeezed in.

Much livelier was a concert given by the Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players. The Jupiter Symphony was an occasional orchestra of young New York instrumentalists, run for years by an inspirational musician called Jens Nygaard. He died three years ago, but friends keep his memory alive by mounting chamber concerts in the Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church near Lincoln Centre.

They have a wonderfully homely atmosphere, with a little old lady serving hot chocolate out of an ancient urn. But there's nothing homely about the playing, which is top-notch (a young Serbian violinist called Stefan Milenkovich was outstanding); nor about the programmes, which are full of exotica. This one included chamber pieces by Paganini, Busoni, Rossini and Mercadante, all new to me.

-- Richard Morrison