

Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players

"The artists are first-rate, the music is never routine....
the singularity of this performance was how closely the performers
worked together for ensemble feel."

An Endearing Obsession

New York, Good Shepherd Church, 152 West 66th Street
10/19/2009

Alexander Glazunov: *Five Novelettes*

Mikhail Glinka: *Trio Pathétique*

Dmitri Shostakovich: *Piano Quintet*

Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players: Ilya Itin (Piano), Dmitri Berlinsky, Erin Keefe (Violins), Maurycy Banaszek (Viola), Inbal Sergev (Cello), Vadim Lando (Clarinet), Gina Cuffari (Bassoon)

Excluding the irritating, maniacal, childish, and psychotically obsessional scherzo from the Shostakovich *Piano Quintet*, the Jupiter Symphony Chamber Society offered yet another program of discovery and enlightenment.

That one despised movement, played with great glee by the artists here, does have its impish glee. But two hours after the concert, it was ringing in my ear, a tinnitus *à la Russe*, with no antidote in earshot.

Still, Jupiter can be forgiven, since every concert is inspiring. The artists are first-rate, the music is never routine, and the acoustics of Good Shepherd Church, while not for the purist who desires dry, clarified, test-tube sterilized sounds, has the resonance, almost a bathroom echo which gives the illusion that one is playing next to the artists themselves.

From the first of three Russian pieces, Glinka's *Trio Pathétique*, the music was never routine. When played, as usual, with violin, cello and piano, this has an unoriginal salon feeling. When performed, for the original instruments—clarinet, bassoon and piano—Glinka's color contrast is greater, the music brighter. Granted, except for a few dark measures, this early work from the "Father of Russian Music" could have been written by Weber, Cimarosa or Reicha. But Jupiter's habitual clarinetist Vadim Lando, has such impeccable technique, seeming to make everything easy, that this early Glinka work was more interesting than usual. Bassoonist Gina Cuffari gave the contrast with as much ease. Pianist Ilya Itin gave it the easy phrasing which it deserved.

Pleasant as this was, the string quartet doing Glazunov's early—and misnamed—*Five Novelettes* gave the sweep which this piece deserved. Not novelettes at all, but

geographical places, it showed Glazunov at his best, a melodist who could imitate many musical styles.

In order, his entrancing movements encountered Spain (with a *very* Russian second theme); the "orient", in this case one of the wild Scythian tribes, with the same theme that Borodin used in his Dances; a modal theme (think of Glazunov's teacher, Rimsky-Korsakov in *Russian Easter Overture*), a waltz, and a plainly ersatz Hungarian finale.

Here, in contrast to the later work, the instruments had an airiness, a straightforward embrace of the different styles. Cellist Inbal Sergev produced one of the most beautiful solos in the third movement, but all four instruments gave that light touch to Glazunov's time-space trip.

Of course the most substantial work was Shostakovich's *Piano Quintet*, a work which ranges from the most agonizing probing to sarcasm (the obsessional scherzo) the enigmatic finale.

The splendid young Russian violinist Dmitri Berlinsky, residing now in Michigan, probably took note of the room's acoustics, since he didn't need to press hard on his strings to bring the Russian tone to the work. His solo in the long *Intermezzo* was the only time he used a greater weight in tone, but it only underlined his very sweet tone. Pianist Itin started the work with a masterful prelude, but the singularity of this performance was how closely the performers worked together for ensemble feel. Shostakovich is perhaps the only 20th Century composer for whom the fugue was natural, not an homage to an earlier time. And the players took on the melodies with an inevitable and ever increasing pulsation.

The finale was such a solid performance that the quiet finale came as a surprise even to those who know the work well. But that is typical for a weekly Monday series (2pm and 7.30pm) which unfailingly entralls.

Harry Rolnick

http://www.concertonet.com/scripts/review.php?ID_review=5939