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WAM series delivers music as it was meant to be heard **MUSIC REVIEW**

By Joyce Tamer TELEGRAM & GAZETTE REVIEWER

WORCESTER — Imagine yourself in a baronial palace somewhere in Europe in the 17th or 18th century. You have been invited by a royal personage to attend a chamber music concert in one of the art-filled salons in his residence.

This was the atmosphere at 3 p.m. Sunday, when the Worcester Art Museum presented the second of three concerts in its new Chamber Music Series. The audience, seated in a European gallery of 18th and 19th century paintings, was transported back in time as they heard music by Handel, Rameau, J.S. Bach and Telemann performed by the Worcester Chamber Music Society.

The opportunity to hear chamber music in an actual chamber (or small room) — for which it was written — was a revelation, and to do so surrounded by beautiful paintings was a rare treat, indeed.

The members of the Chamber Music Society — regulars Peter Sulski, violin and viola; Tracy Krauss, flute; and Ian Watson, harpsichord — were joined by guest cellist, Miriam Bolkosky. The performers, as is their custom, created a relaxed and intimate atmosphere, as if they were playing for a group of friends, which they really were.

That atmosphere, combined with an interesting and varied program, and the exuberance and joy in the music which they exhibited in their performance, resulted in a special afternoon of music making. In addition, many of the comments that were made in the illuminating preconcert lecture — the different quality of sound made by the shorter Baroque bow, the timbre of the wooden flute, and the sound of the harpsichord, up close and personal — became clear during the performance.

The excellent technique of the members of the society is something that we have come to take for granted, but what continues to amaze and attract is the sheer musicality of their performances.

The elegant phrasing, the intimate conversations between instruments, the perfectly matched and executed ornamentation — indeed their very breathing together — result in a very satisfying and uplifting musical experience. The opening Sonata VIII in B flat by Handel for a quartet of instruments was followed by the G major Pièces de Clavecin by Rameau, the two contrasting compositions enabling the audience to discern the difference between the German and French style of music performance.

Peter Sulski and Ian Watson followed with a sensitive performance of the Sonata #1 in G for viola and harpsichord to end the first half of the program.

James Welu, director of the Worcester Art Museum, used the intermission to comment on the various paintings in the gallery. His charming and informative commentary highlighted some Worcester connections to the paintings, their acquisition and their conservation. His remarks were fascinating and an additional treat in an already treat-laden afternoon.

The second half of the program began with a solo performance by Ian Watson of the G major Prelude and Fugue from the “Well Tempered Clavier,” followed by a brilliant reading by the society of the first Paris Quartet by George Philipp Telemann.

The playful conversation between the violin and the flute in the fourth movement of this piece was especially delightful.

Making music in the galleries is a new venture of the Worcester Art Museum. It is a beautiful marriage of the two arts and one that we hope continues and expands.

The third and final concert is on May 8. Don't miss it.

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