

# MTC kicks off with Baroque program

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Special to The Recorder

CHARLEMONT — As Mohawk Trail Concerts began its 25th season this past weekend, some changes were in evidence. For the first time, seating in Charlemont's Federated Church was assigned and numbered. The program booklet had 40 letter-sized pages (plus insert), full of historic photos and reminiscences by many of those associated with this successful series.

Executive director John Boy asked for a show of hands in the audience: those who had been coming since 1989, since 1984 and so on back to the first summer of 1970. It was clear that MTC has a long-standing and devoted following.

In addition to the usual Friday and Saturday night concerts, this weekend kicked off the 25th anniversary celebration with a young musicians concert, a lecture, a free community concert, a chicken barbecue and a re-enactment of the "the genesis" of MTC — a Sunday morning service featuring Arnold Black and Alice Parker performing Handel's Sonata for Violin and Organ.

This first regular concert on the series was titled "Music from the Baroque." On it were works by Telemann, Quantz, J.S. Bach and his son C.P.E. Bach.

The performance opened with a Duet for flute and violin by the younger Bach, bringing together New York violinist Sheila Reinhold with Valley flutist Christopher Krueger — both of international reputation as well as being regular performers on this series.

Although Krueger is known for his Baroque (wooden) flute playing, he chose what appeared to be a modern instrument (silver, with gold headstock) for the evening. His vibrato-free sound was refreshing. Often he played the most florid passages at a low dynamic level, attesting to his remarkable control.

He and Reinhold synchronized their ornaments perfectly in these three short movements. She played with a Baroque bow, held two to three inches up from the "frog."

## Music review

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Harpichordist Gregory Hayes treated us to "12 variations on La Folia," also by C.P.E. Bach. He first explained that this dated from the last phase of the Baroque — when the style was more flamboyant, containing sudden shifts in mood — and that the piece called for the highest and lowest notes available on the instrument.

One could just as easily have called this music the *first phase* of the Classical style or perhaps simply characterize it as schizophrenic — as certain variations required the precious timbre of the harpsichord while others, with their block chords, called out for the dynamic contrast of the piano (known in those days as "fortepiano" — "loud-soft"). Hayes gave a spunky performance of this quirky piece.

The first half closed with the Concerto in E minor for recorder, flute and strings by Telemann. Toy Sansom soloed on the alto recorder, achieving a remarkably pure tone. Compared to the other players, he seemed motionless — almost as though in a meditation. Not surprisingly, Krueger matched the poten-

tially greater volume of his flute precisely to the recorder's level.

The second movement contained some delightful sequences (a sequence being a melody that repeats itself, more or less, while exploring different degrees of the scale). There were tremelando (rapid bowing of the same note) swells that remind one of Vivaldi's "Four Seasons."

In the third movement, the soloists were accompanied by a three-note pizzicato figure in the strings, which became mesmerizing through repetition.

Sheila Reinhold, sitting next to me at this point, said I should expect to be delighted and surprised by the last movement in particular. It was a unique Presto, having elements in common with Scottish bagpipe, New England contra dance and Roumanian folk music.

After the risk-taking compositions of the first half, the Quantz Trio Sonata seemed quite tame. We again heard the combination of Krueger and Sansom, now accompanied by the continuo of Hayes and Lucy Bardo, viola da gamba. The work also seemed to be missing a finale, as the three movements followed a slow-fast-slow scheme.

It took only nine players to create a chamber orchestra sonority, helped by the rich acoustics of the church, in J.S. Bach's Brandenburg Concert No. 4. Indicative of the sixth sense these well-seasoned players bring with them, no conductor was needed. Playing were Peggy McAdams and Arnold Black (MTC artistic director), violins; Masako Yanagita (a regular MTC player as violin soloist), viola; Bardo, cello; Salvatore Macchia, bass; and Hayes, harpsichord.

The three concertino soloists were Reinhold, Sansom and Krueger (the latter playing alto recorder).

I hadn't remembered this popular piece as being such a showpiece for the violin — though someone suggested afterward that the violin part so distinguished itself this time because Reinhold actually played all the notes (while other violinists may fudge it). As the recorders

played the main theme in thirds, Reinhold cavorted masterfully over them with breakneck runs — delivered with the ease of a French chef beating eggs.

Much was said, in the course of the evening, about the special appeal of Mohawk Trail Concerts: how the finest players will reduce their normal fee substantially for the opportunity to share their art with so appreciative an audience in the relaxed atmosphere of rural Charlemont.

It seems inherent in the vision of its founders, Arnold and Ruth Black, that making beautiful music is only part of the equation, that one also needs to present it in a way that enhances people's receptivity, that opens them to being deeply touched. Music lovers through the area applaud their success in that.

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