

The Epoch Times

A Full Cup of Music

Clarinetist Stanley Drucker satisfies the crowd

March 28, 2008

By NADIA GHATTAS

Like thirsty travelers at a well, a full house was ready to drink some cool and wonderful music at Carnegie's Weill Concert Hall.

On March 22 MidAmerica Productions presented the **American Chamber Ensemble** with special guest, clarinetist Stanley Drucker in a concert celebrating the 2008 Festival of Long Island Composers. Listening to the masters is a great way to spend a Saturday afternoon. The ensemble performed the works of Nancy Bloomers Deussen, Douglas Moore, Robert Muczynski, Marga Richter, Peter Schickele, and Virgil Thomson.

The afternoon's concert was of magnificent quality and the audience was drinking it all in. The four wind players—Naomi Drucker, guest performer Stanley Drucker, alto clarinetist Mindy Dragovich and base clarinetist Jesse Grose—magnificently blended their sound quality. Often the clarinet is strident, loud, and ordinary; today we had the opposite—beauty.

The Fantasy Trio, Opus 26 for Clarinet, Cello and Piano by Muszynski is a marvelous composition. The work alternates between rather terse rhythmic statements and sustained lyrical moments climaxing with a movement full of exuberance and unabashed joy.

Cellist Christine Walewska, who was in the audience, said to me that I must meet this great composer. "What he has composed in the second movement was a magnificent cello solo. I can just imagine a work by him for cello with piano or orchestra."

Another rewarding surprise was the presence of the composer Marga Richter. Her composition *Fandango Fantasy* for Clarinet, Violin, Cello and Piano gave wings to the human soul.

Every composition on the program was beautifully chosen, including Virgil Thomson's Five Portraits for Four Clarinets, and Peter Schickele's (a.k.a. P.D.Q. Bach)

Quartet for Clarinet, Violin, Cello and Piano.

The program also included the two fine pianists Blanche Abram and Marilyn Sherman Lehman, whose daughter made her debut as a soprano in Weill Hall. Sherman Lehman's playing was of utmost sensitivity and artistry in accompanying her daughter and playing the Peter Schickele piece.

The performances sparkled with clarity and precision. Blanche Abram and Naomi Drucker, co-directors of the American Chamber Ensemble, played in perfect sync with each other. Their superior musicianship was recognized with an induction into the Long Island Music Hall of Fame and the Long Island Sound Award in 2007.

Stanley Drucker, principal clarinetist of the New York Philharmonic and honored in 1998 as Musical America's Instrumentalist of the Year, has made approximately 150 solo appearances with the orchestra. With more than 50 years at the top of the musical world, Mr. Drucker has been nominated for two Grammys, both times for "Best Instrumental Soloist/Classical with Orchestra."

Mr. Drucker has numerous recordings to his credit, including *Recitals with Principals from the New York Philharmonic*, and *Schumann's Complete Works for Winds and Piano*. Mr. Drucker began clarinet studies at age 10 with Leon Russianoff, and later attended the High School of Music and Art in New York and the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. He has the distinction of being one of the few living orchestral musicians whose biography is included in the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians.

As an established consortium of Long Island musicians, the American Chamber Ensemble selects music for clarinet and piano with strings, woodwinds, and/or voice. They generally perform works by American composers.