

THE EAST HAMPTON STAR

SHINES FOR ALL

ARTS & LIVING
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Opinion

Sheer Joy by Perlman

BY DANIEL W. KOONTZ

When Itzhak Perlman comes to play at the Old Whalers Church in Sag Harbor, one might expect a heavy-duty night of serious music. He is a living legend, whose mastery of the violin has been riveting audiences worldwide for more than four decades. The Perlman Music Program, which runs a performance workshop on Shelter Island, draws the finest young musical talent from across the globe.

Last Friday's concert, however, was refreshingly informal, featuring selected movements drawn from the masterpieces of the chamber music repertory. As a capacity crowd settled into the pews, Merry Peckham, the director of the chamber music workshop at the Perlman Music Program, set the tone for the evening, cheerfully urging us to treat the musical selections as an assortment of "appetizers." This went over well with the audience; after all, on a Friday night in August maybe all we really want are the highlights. Especially when they are played with such skill and sheer joy.

The title of the program was "Tutto Suonare," or "everybody plays," and, indeed, over the course of the evening every student participant in the workshop played on at least one selection. This meant that the stage had to be reset for each piece, allowing for frequent breaks and contributing to the relaxed atmosphere. A single member of the illustrious faculty joined the students on each selection, and this included Mr. Perlman himself, who took the stage to rapturous ovations to close each half of the program.

The concert opened with the first movement of an early Beethoven piano trio. The ensemble, including faculty cellist Paul Katz, negotiated the music's sharp contrasts with conviction, and the pianist Peter Dugan handled the intricate piano passages with virtuosic flair. The slow movement from Dvorak that followed featured a beautiful songlike cello solo, sensitively played by Amit Even-tov, paired with a delicate reply on the piano, gracefully managed by Vivian Hornik Weilerstein, a faculty pianist.

After this relatively restrained pairing, the Allegro Brillante from Schumann's Piano Quintet was a burst of unbound energy. The asymmetric first theme, featuring the whole en-



Amit Even-tov played the cello in concert on Friday.

Morgan McGovern

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The Perlman Music Program faculty student performance on Friday at the Old Whalers Church in Sag Harbor was filled to capacity. Founded by Itzhak Perlman, the performance workshop draws many of the finest young musicians from around the world to Shelter Island.

Morgan McGovern

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semble led by the faculty violinist Donald Weilerstein, was like a crazy dance, while the second theme, featuring a duet between the second violinist Joseph Krumholz and the violist Laura Seay, was like an obsessive game. The development section was almost a miniature piano concerto, played with bravura by Michael Mizrahi.

Next up, the fourth movement of Shostakovich's Piano Trio No. 2 continued Schumann's manic energy with its own crazy dances and obsessive games, played with a spirit of dark humor by an ensemble including Ms. Weilerstein.

The audience stood as Mr. Perlman made his entrance for the Scherzo from the Brahms Piano Quintet. The suddenly reverent mood was broken, though, by the breaking of one of the second violinist's strings as she tuned up, prompting one audience member to call for a joke while another instrument was fetched. Mr. Perlman obliged with a one-liner about violists, and any air of formality was banished. The ensemble then dug into the music with unbridled force, using the intensity of Brahms's insistent rhythms to bring the first half of

the concert to a thrilling close.

The first selection on the second half, the Scherzo from Schubert's Double Cello Quintet, opened with a hunting horn motif leading into a fast-paced chase, with extensive call and response between the violins and cellos. In contrast to this, the introspective trio section drew upon the rich sound of the viola and the paired cellos. While energetic, this performance suffered slightly from intonation problems.

Shostakovich returned with his Two Pieces for String Quartet, and for the first time we heard an entire work from start to finish, with only a switching of places between movements. The first piece, Prelude, veered dramatically between instrumental interplay and brilliant soloistic turns, with a particularly spectacular flourish played by the first violinist Sasha Kazovsky. In the second piece, Scherzo, a furioso opening gives way to a brooding cello solo, assertively played by Mimi Yu. Soon, the original ferocity returns, building to a dazzling display of ensemble virtuosity, led by the first violinist Joshua Weilerstein. Judging from the audience response, this was perhaps the best-loved selection of the evening.

The concert ended with two movements from Mendelssohn's Octet. The musicians brought a liveliness to the Andante, paying special attention to a recurring interior line played in octaves by the violist William Frampton and faculty cellist Paul Katz. Mr. Perlman then returned to the stage to lead the rousing Presto, which was played with clarity and precision, allowing the audience to hear all of the echoing transfer of motives from player to player.

Speaking briefly during intermission, Toby Perlman, Mr. Perlman's wife and co-founder of the Perlman Music Program, began by noting that this was the first time the chamber music workshop had performed in Sag Harbor. Before she could go any further, the audience interrupted with loud applause, signaling their appreciation to the Perlmans for enriching the cultural life of the East End. Ms. Perlman concluded with a promise to return next summer, to which the only possible response is "thank you."

Daniel Koontz is a composer and performer with degrees from the Eastman School of Music and Stony Brook University. His piece "Twist" for two pianos premiered at Pianofest last month.