



Isabella's First Dinner Concert a Big Success

by: D. J. Luksetich

The Star Newspapers: June 8, 2006

Forces both culinary and artistic were in perfect alignment Tuesday evening May 30 as the Isabella cafe of Tinley Park hosted its first-ever dinner concert. Under the auspices of musical entrepreneur Nick Yasillo (Norton Building Concert Series) and Isabella cafe's Sue Armstrong, about 40 concertgoers enjoyed exceptional food and quality music in the intimate confines of this lovely restaurant.

Four elongated tables accommodated the congenial group so room could be allowed for the musicians. Dinner began with soup/salad followed by a generous portion of chicken marsala deftly prepared by chef Juan Carlos Guzman. Rice and a vegetable medley rounded out the delicious main course only to be topped by a strawberry/raspberry pinwheel cake, a "to die for" dessert says this music critic turned restaurant reviewer.

At exactly 8:00 P.M., Fifth House Ensemble members Jennifer Woodrum (clarinet), Adam Liebert (violin), Sharon Chung (viola), and Herine Coetzee (cello), opened the after dinner concert with Mozart's quartet for clarinet and string trio. One expects a clarinet to dominate in a piece such as this, but Woodrum led without pulling. Even the exchanges with Liebert's violin took on a balance exceptional for a group in existence for such a short time. The performance was a little slice of nobility.

Beethoven's duo for clarinet and cello came next, a sorbet after the Mozart, as announced by cellist Herine Coetzee, and simply fun to hear.

Next came a truly stunning performance of a violin/viola duo by Mozart with such an intricate interplay between Liebert and Chung that it sometimes sounded like 4 hands on one giant stringed instrument. The second movement featured a floating violin with a lullaby viola and the finale was highlighted by a true duet with themes exchanged within an equality of instrumentation.

The program ended with Hummel's quartet. Although declared "a find" by Liebert and performed well, it contained a few too many "cutesy" devices (sudden volcanic bursts, short pizzicatos, odd sequences) for this critic's ear. However, the hymn-like third movement was gorgeous.

At the outset, Yasillo welcomed everyone "to this experiment." The experiment was a rousing success and the announcement of an upcoming chamber series in Tinley Park was greeted with enthusiasm. Hopefully, a future dinner concert will also be in the offing.

D. J. Luksetich is a freelance writer who can be reached at djluksetich@comcast.net.

**MELISSA SNOZA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
4704 N KENMORE AVE, CHICAGO IL 60640
224-715-6455
INFO@FIFTH-HOUSE.COM**