

The Boston Globe

Radius displays excellent range

By Ellen Pfeifer

Globe Correspondent / January 31, 2001

CAMBRIDGE - Now in its second season, the Radius Ensemble is a group of musicians who are not only terrific players but also extremely personable human beings. Its members communicate a real love for what they are doing and invite the listener through informal spoken remarks before each piece as well as vivid music-making.

Their concert Saturday night offered a skillful blend of the new combined with established masters of the near and more distant past. The program was also continually refreshed by the variety of instrumental timbres - strings and piano, but also winds alone and in combinations.

In a gracious gesture to the Longy School of Music where it holds all its concerts, Radius opened the program with a 1994 Trio for clarinet, viola, and piano by Eric Sawyer, Longy's chairman of composition and theory. In a single movement with four contrasting sections and an epilogue, the piece has what pianist Anne Kissel called "a lazy, jazzy quality not without some good-natured nastiness." The nastiness, from this listener's perspective, emanates from the dense, complex contrapuntal sections in which the three instruments seem to be going vigorously about their business without regard for anyone else. The more mellow, connected music comes in the lyrical sections where the players seem to converge onto the same wavelength. Then, the partnering between the rich timbres of Annette Klein's viola and Margo McGowan's clarinet sounded particularly attractive.

Franz Schubert's great B-flat Major Piano Trio dominated the remaining segment of the program's first half. Here the comparatively reticent voices of violinist Liana Zaretsky and cellist Michael Bonner were overshadowed by Sarah Bob's sumptuous and eloquent piano.

Post-intermission, the concert followed a similar pattern: contemporary piece followed by established masterwork. Toru Takemitsu's "Entre-temps" (1986) didn't stand a chance against Leos Janacek's delightful, endlessly inventive and ingratiating "Mladi" (Youth) for wind sextet. Takemitsu's work is something of a chamber music concerto for oboe with string quartet. Apparently formless and elusive with the composer emulating "the structure of a dream," the piece nonetheless offers a grateful opportunity for the oboe to sing with great expressiveness. Oboist Jennifer Montbach, Radius's founding director, supplied everything required.

Playful, jolly, with an evocation of the bosky outdoors and a recollection of boyhood high jinks, the Janacek is simply irresistible. The composer wrote it at the age of 70 near the end of a long musical life in which fame came late. Its untroubled and good-humored countenance speaks of contentment much to be envied. The Radius wind players performed it with high gloss and obvious affection. ■

Radius displays excellent range

By Ellen Pfeifer
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

CAMBRIDGE — Now in its second season, the Radius Ensemble is a group of musicians who are not only terrific players but also extremely personable human beings. Its members communicate a real love for what they are doing and invite the listener through informal spoken remarks before each piece as well as vivid music-making.

Music Review

Their concert Saturday night offered a skillful blend of the new combined with established masters of the near and more distant past. The program was also continually refreshed by the variety of instrumental timbres — strings and piano, but also winds alone and in combinations.

In a gracious gesture to the Longy School of Music where it holds all its concerts, Radius opened the program with a 1994 Trio for clarinet, viola, and piano by Eric Sawyer, Longy's chairman of composition and theory. In a single movement with four contrasting sections and an epilogue, the piece has what pianist Anne Kissel called "a lazy, jazzy quality

Radius Ensemble

Jennifer Montbach, director
At: Edward M. Pickman Concert Hall,
Longy School of Music,
Cambridge, Saturday night

not without some good-natured nastiness." The nastiness, from this listener's perspective, emanates from the dense, complex contrapuntal sections in which the three instruments seem to be going vigorously about their business without regard for anyone else. The more mellow, connected music comes in the lyrical sections where the players seem to converge onto the same wavelength. Then, the partnering between the rich timbres of Annette Klein's viola and Margo McGowan's clarinet sounded particularly attractive.

Franz Schubert's great B-flat Major Piano Trio dominated the remaining segment of the program's first half. Here the comparatively reticent voices of violinist Liana Zaretsky and cellist Michael Bonner were overshadowed by Sarah Bob's sumptuous and eloquent piano.

Post-intermission, the concert followed a similar pattern: contemporary piece followed by established masterwork. Toru Takemitsu's "Entre-temps" (1986) didn't stand a chance against Leos Janacek's delightful, endlessly inventive and ingratiating "Mladi" (Youth) for wind sextet. Takemitsu's work is something of a chamber music concerto for oboe with string quartet. Apparently formless and elusive with the composer emulating "the structure of a dream," the piece nonetheless offers a grateful opportunity for the oboe to sing with great expressiveness. Oboist Jennifer Montbach, Radius's founding director, supplied everything required.

Playful, jolly, with an evocation of the bosky outdoors and a recollection of boyhood high jinks, the Janacek is simply irresistible. The composer wrote it at the age of 70 near the end of a long musical life in which fame came late. Its untroubled and good-humored countenance speaks of contentment much to be envied. The Radius wind players performed it with high gloss and obvious affection.