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## Radius is very accessible, somewhat successful

By Richard Buell

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CAMBRIDGE - The members of Radius Ensemble, now in its fourth season, are engaging young people who believe we could all do without at least some of the formality that tends to encrust the public performance of chamber music. That's hard to argue against; after all, who loves stuffed shirts, apart from other stuffed shirts? Saturday night, though, this willingness to please and be audience-friendly and unforbidding verged on the relentless.

The nonmusical aspects of the affair went swimmingly, given the program books with Robert Kirzinger's extensive notes hadn't arrived from the printers. Before each piece a different member got up - and after deploring the absence of program books, which became a leitmotif over the course of the evening - delivered a few words of shop talk, nothing too abstruse, always remembering to plug Radius Ensemble's Web site.

There wasn't, in truth, all that much to say about three of the four pieces on the program. In his Quintet in E-flat Op. 88 No. 2, Anton Reicha's tirelessly inventive wind scoring - and a wit and melodiousness of close to Mozart or Rossini quality - spoke for itself; the capable, if hardworking, performance scanted some of the zaniness, though. Malcolm Arnold's whimsical Trio Op. 6 might have come from one of his Ealing Studio film comedies of the 1940s. In Dvorak's "Dumky" Trio, the near-Mahlerian desolation and starkness, startling at first, get drowned in syrup. Marjorie Merryman's terse, passionate, ingeniously structured "Hidden Boundaries" (1984) offered welcome surcease from the prevailing "leave your mind" ethos - so fine a piece, and in so real a performance, it ought to have been done twice. For the rest, a case of too much dessert, too soon. ■

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