

# IN THE SPOTLIGHT: *Energy and joy fill New Year's Day concert*

By John Paul Keeler

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Berkshire Bach under the direction of Kenneth Cooper from the Harpsichord gave a brilliant annual New Years Day concert at the Troy Music Hall. The concert was a celebration of the Berkshire Bach Ensemble's 20th anniversary of music making in the Berkshires and at Troy Music Hall.

## REVIEW

The seventeen musicians of the ensemble are all virtuoso instrumentalists and hearing them with their guest violinists Joseph Silverstein, Ani Kavafian Eugene Drucker and flautist Carol Wincene was an enormous musical treasure for New Years Day.

A word needs to be said about the acoustics of Troy Music Hall. It matches the sound in Carnegie Hall, Symphony Hall in Boston, The Brooklyn Academy of Music as well as the Academy of Music in Philadelphia. That vibrant space gives the artists a chance to hear themselves and frees them up to greater artistic and tonal freedom.

The program began with Bach's (1685-1750) "Brandenburg Concerto No 1 in F Major BWV 1046". In the very first measures the music soared into the hall with exciting brilliance and the definition of each instrument singly and collectively sounded in perfect balance. The singular beauty of Margery Bagley's violin, the pungent sound of Marsha Heller's oboe and the golden tone of the horns of Alan Dean and Neil Mueller with the wrapping of strings and harpsichord remained spell binding.

Next came Georg Philipp Telemann's (1681-1769) "Concerto in D Major for Four Violins (TWV 40:202)". This marvelous concerto for four violins without an orchestra was ravishingly played by Joseph Silverstein, Ani Kavafian, Eugene Drucker and Margery Bagley. The work is an enchanting perpetuo mobile of soaring sound giving the illusion of a full string orchestra. The middle movement 'Grave' was throbbing musical poetry.

The first half ended with Bach's "Concerto in D Major for Three Violins, Strings and Winds (BWV 1064)". In this exciting piece Silverstein, Kavafian and Drucker pulled out all the stops, the orchestra followed suit and the glorious sound went nearly through the roof. The excitement the three violinists produced was like the famed "Three Tenors" concerts from Lincoln Center.

After intermission the serene and



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*Soloist Carol Wincenc performs Bach's Overture (Suite) No. 2 in B Minor for Flute and Strings (BWV 1067).*



*Left, noted soloists perform Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G major (BWV 1048) on remarkable violins: Ronald Gorevic (viola); Eugene Drucker (1686 Stradivarius); Irena Momchilova (viola); Ani Kavafian (1736 Stradivarius); Lih-Wen Ting (viola); Joseph Silverstein (1742 Guarneri del Gesu); Kenneth Cooper (harpsichord, musical director)*

playful "Ouveture (Suite) No 2 in B minor for Flute and Strings (BWV 1067)" featured Carol Wincene, on the flute. The work is a delightful contrast to all that went before. The energy, joy and pastoral mood of the work brought magic to the audience and when Wincene finished with wonderful bravura the Badinerie the house nearly came down.

When one thought that things could never get better the ensemble with the three violins did a thrilling slam bang playing of Bach's "Brandenburg Concerto No 3 in G major (BWV 1048)". Cooper brought his musicians to the peak of their form with subtle pacing and enveloping crescendos. Using the Largo from Bach's Clavier Concerto No 5 in F Minor as the middle movement was an inspiration.

The glorious wonder of the Largo stopped time with the comforting sound of Marcia Heller and Alexandra Knoll with their mesmerizing oboes, Meg

Owens English Horn, Peter Weitzner's Bass and Stephen Walt's Bassoon bringing the impress of perfection to the piece. The last movement was over the top joy. Just seeing the body language of Ani Kavafian and the intensity of all three violinists with the other fiery musicians brought the audience up on their feet for a grateful standing ovation.

Finally this writer has to say that in all the many years among the 20 of Berkshire Bach he has heard, their fidelity to music making and brilliant execution and artistry has been amazingly consistent. Would that they would initiate a Summer Program for the community to hear an inexhaustible run of J S Bach, his sons, Handel, Vivaldi and Telemann.

The next concert in their current season is a program titled "Bach the Organist" with organist Walter Hulse and Alan Dean Trumpet and strings on February 13 at 4 p.m. at St. Stephens Church in Pittsfield.