

# The Post-Standard

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## **Syracuse Friends of Chamber Music host Walden Chamber Players**

The Syracuse Friends of Chamber Music welcomed the Walden Chamber Players on Saturday as a part of their 57th season. This Boston-based ensemble is made up of five string players, including violinists Irina Muresanu and Harumi Rhodes, as well as an oboist, drawn from such groups as the Boston Symphony, the Boston Pops, Boston University and the Boston Conservatory of Music. These diverse backgrounds possibly provide an insight into the variety of interpretive fashions on display in Saturday's Friends concert.

The concert began with a performance of Mozart's String Quintet No. 1 in B, presumably a product of the composer's teen years, although a new appraisal of Mozart's output relating to dates is forthcoming from the scholarly community. While the work is fairly simple in substance, the balanced use of performance forces and structural solidity of the piece are marvels.

The ensemble was balanced and consistent in tone production, and seemed cognizant of the findings of the Historical Instrument Performance movement.

Shorter works by English composers Britten and Finzi followed, with Oboist Laura Ahlback, who played with polished technique and lovely tone. The Phantasy Quartet for Oboe and String Trio is another early work—Britten's Opus No. 2. It's well-wrought, although far from being Britten's loveliest creation. The work benefited immensely from the care and concentration the Walden players lavished upon it.

Finzi's "Interlude for Oboe and String Quartet" is a much more lyrical, rhapsodic work, and the Walden players entered fully into the spirit of the piece, and did well by its slender charms.

The concert concluded with a selection where one felt the Walden Chamber Players were fully engaged and in their proper *métier*. The String Quintet No. 2 of Johannes Brahms, despite being a late work, brims with passion, and even includes references to "gypsy music" which occurs prominently in earlier Brahms compositions. It is the superbly balanced interplay of the five string voices and the considerable technical mastery of form that signals the late career status of the work.

The violinists switched positions here, and a more restrained first brought great balance—both tonal and structural—to the reading, without a loss of vigor. Violists Carol Rodland and Christof Huebner were superbly matched, both warm and fluid, and cellist Ashima Schripp was committed and completely in control of her medium-sized but engagingly bright tone. A standing ovation concluded the evening.

— Chuck Klaus