

# The Washington Post

## PERFORMING ARTS

Friday, January 19, 2007

### Walden Chamber Players

Celebrating their 10th season, the Walden Chamber Players took on an adventuresome program Wednesday at the Austrian Embassy. In various ways, most of the music programmed by the Boston-based ensemble (violinist Joel Pitchon, violist Christof Huebner and cellist Ashima Scripp) paid tribute to Johann Sebastian Bach: a set of preludes and fugues arranged by Mozart, K. 404a; Ernst Krenek's "Parvula Corona Musicalis," Op. 122, dedicated to Bach; Arnold Schoenberg's String Trio, Op. 45; and Gerhard Schedl's String Trio. Ernst von Dohnanyi's more romantic Serenade in C, Op. 10, closed the evening.

Except for Dohnanyi, all of these composers had strong ties to Vienna, where Bach's instrumental style had been nurtured and imitated a half-century before his so-called "rediscovery" in 19th-century Berlin. And Wednesday's music revealed the Vienna connection, thanks largely to Walden's meticulous and expressive playing. With a baroque rhythmic pulse softened by extended lyrical phrases, the group's lucid reading of the Mozart arrangements sounded more like Mozart than Bach. The ensemble treated the Schoenberg with riveting intensity as much as with loving care, outlining Bach's legacy clothed in Schoenberg's elegantly neurotic fashion -- thrusting counterpoint, taut textures and sheer insistence.

The concert's most beautifully arresting moments came with the piece by Schedl (the composer died in 2000 at the age of 43). Rarely, if ever, heard here, his String Trio is a sweetly lyrical lament borne on turbulent contrapuntal dissonance -- again, Bach in a new guise. The Krenek, one of countless works based on notes spelling "Bach" (in German notation, "B" is B-flat and "h" is B), was played with detailed confidence throughout its sometimes ruminative, sometimes playful dialectic. As filled with tension as all this music was, Dohnanyi's Serenade ended the concert on a rather relaxing note.

— Cecelia Porter