

Chamber music concert makes lasting impression

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A quick reading beforehand of the program for Sunday afternoon's concert by the South Coast Chamber Music Society at Grace Episcopal Church suggested I was in for an interesting juxtapositioning, if you will.

The program notes listed works by three composers, each of whom, however subtly, had

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been influenced by the others in and around the Paris Conservatory in the late 1800s — Ravel, Faure and Debussy. Ravel was a pupil of Faure, and also influenced Debussy. Faure eventually became director of the school.

I had made up my mind to try to discern any similarities, but I became so engrossed in the presentations by the four artists on the concert program that any comparisons went by the board. The common denominator seemed to be the classical and romantic qualities of each performance.

But I'm jumping ahead of the program that opened stirringly with Saint-Saens' Sonate for Oboe and Piano Op. 166 played gorgeously by oboist Donna Marie Cobert and guest pianist Deborah Dewolf Emery. Ms Emery held back very obviously in her accompaniment of Mrs. Cobert's oboe artistry so as to compliment rather than override her rendition. Once in a while during the three movements, Ms. Emery's accompaniment seemed almost too laid-back, but not to the detriment of the piece.

From there the audience had its first chance to hear guest soprano Rachel Lewis of Dartmouth, a rich experience, indeed. Performing Maurice

Ravel's "LaFlute Enchantee," Herman Bemberg's "Chant Arabe" and Edouardo Lalo's "Chant Breton," flutist Claude Cobert showed his dexterity with his instrument making for a very pleasant-sounding trio — Ms. Emery, Ms. Lewis and Mr. Cobert.

Ms. Lewis's phrasing was superb, and her interpretation of the lyrics impeccable. A barely noticeable shrillness in her higher registers did not detract from her delivery, which was smooth as glass.

As Manet is considered founder of the Impressionist school of painting so Debussy is regarded as founder of the Impressionist school of music, as evidenced by "Syrinx," played as a flute solo by Claude Cobert. The melodiousness of this piece couldn't have been exhibited more pleasurably.

Following intermission, Sonata for Flute and Piano Op.23 by Lowell Lieberman, again with Ms. Emery and Claude Cobert combining their talents, settled everyone down for what was to come — the three ladies on the program giving their all to "Soir," a piece written by a female composer, Irene Poldowski, and you could tell they enjoyed every minute.

This piece made me think what it might be like if Ms. Emery was turned loose on something by Chopin on her own and Ms. Lewis ripped into arias from "Carmen" or "Tosca." Both artists seemed champing at the bit to do something very spectacular with their considerable talents.

The foursome performing Sunday afternoon gave us an "Impressionist Voice," as the concert was named, that made a lasting impression.