

TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY

Sunday, January 31, 2010
Grand Theatre

Glen Fast, Conductor
Valery Lloyd-Watts, Piano
Gisèle Dalbec, Violin
Eileen Beaudette, Viola

PROGRAM

Centre Street Scenes Runions

Twilight Fire Anhalt

Intermission

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Minor Beethoven
Allegro con brio
Largo
Rondo: allegro

Sunday's program has a thoroughly fascinating profile, one in which Greg Runions in his distinctively jazz-flavoured manner presents us with a new piece written for two of his Kingston Symphony colleagues, Istvan Anhalt celebrates, in a very personal way, the legend of Baucis and Philemon, and Valery Lloyd-Watts performs a breakthrough concerto by Ludwig van Beethoven.

Centre Street Scenes finds its composer in atmospheric mode. Soloists begin alone. Gradually, hauntingly, instrumentation increases until full orchestra accompaniment is achieved and soloists and orchestra together carry us through to a dramatic close. Composer Runions: "I've created a fair amount of music for big band but it's really just the process I use to create music for the big band that has rubbed off in writing this work."

The Istvan Anhalt piece we hear today was premiered by the Kingston Symphony in 2002. The title, Twilight Fire, in the words of the composer "made a nod toward the stage in life in which I recognize myself as living."

As sketches for the new work grew a related consideration emerged in Anhalt's mind: Might the new piece mark the Anhalt's golden wedding anniversary? Might he present it as a gift to the lady in his life, "the unique and only Bea?"

A further thought came to associate itself with the work: Ovid's *Metamorphoses* tells the story of Baucis and Philemon, an elderly couple who offered shelter and a

humble meal to strangers who proved to be none other than the supreme deity Jupiter and his son Mercury. As a result of their kindness, Jupiter granted their wish to die together and he made of them two trees standing side by side on a hill in Phrygia.

Istvan Anhalt: "Without ever entertaining the idea of a piece in the manner of 'program music', which had no appeal for me, I hoped that the sounds of the new piece would somehow evoke the spirit of this antique Greek Story." Only in its enchanting conclusion is something more specific alluded to. Here the music can be heard "as resembling two trees standing close to each other with their branches intertwining, suggesting a couple in an ageless embrace."

The year was 1800. On the 16th of December of this year Beethoven became 30 years old. He was a sought-after piano virtuoso and was becoming increasingly recognized as a composer of considerable stature. There had been hints of hearing difficulties, but they weren't a matter of serious concern. In this year he composed the First symphony, the Opus 18 String Quartets, the Septet, the Prometheus ballet and the C Minor Piano Concerto #3. Of these by far the most significant is the piano concerto. It's the most Mozartean of Beethoven's five piano concertos, the first movement clearly modeled on Mozart's own piano concerto in the same key, but it takes off where Mozart left off. Mozart was the composer who brought the concerto into a stature comparable to that of the symphony and Beethoven in this third piano concerto takes the concerto idea into a truly symphonic realm. By way of example, the orchestral exposition of themes in movement one is so involving one wonders what's left for the soloist, to say. However, a highly dramatic entrance in upward scales and a fortissimo statement of the main theme brings the solo piano to the fore and we realize that what Beethoven has achieved is a new sense of partnership between piano and orchestra.

A supremely beautiful second movement Largo follows. Note particularly, the section in which bassoon and flute are accompanied by the soloist. It's pure magic.

The Rondo finale seems to say, "Now, let's have some fun". It romps to a robust conclusion, a fitting completion for a work unquestionably qualified to be deemed 'perfect'.