



Week of May 24, 2010 Concert Reports

Les Délices at Tregoning & Co. Gallery (May 22)

by Mike Telin

Every year musical ensembles come up with new and creative ways to introduce audiences to their music. Recently many ensembles have begun using alternative venues such as art galleries, churches and bars, as well as new programming initiatives in an attempt to "break down" the perceived barriers that exist between artist and audience. Such approaches work best in the hands of people who have really thought through the concept, carefully chosen the venue and work to provide a welcoming and friendly environment. When this happens the experience can add up to a laid-back, fun evening of great music making. Northeast Ohio audiences are fortunate in that there have been many successful new initiatives started by music ensemble this season, and one of the best is the Gallery Series of Les Délices. On Saturday the 22nd of May at the Tregoning & Company Gallery, Les Délices presented a beautifully constructed program titled "Petits Violons du Roy", and once again delivered a stunning 70 minutes worth of music from the French Baroque that worked perfectly in an intimate space.

Established in 1648, the members of Petits Violons du Roy were the personal servants of Louis XIV, and except for Pierre Dancian Philidor, all of the composers featured on the evening's program were regular performers in the group. The program opened with the Suite in F from 1707 of Pierre Gaultier de Marseille performed by the full ensemble, Debra Nagy and Kathryn Montoya, baroque oboes and recorders, Scott Metcalf and Julie Andrijeski, baroque violins, Emily Walhout, viola da Gamba, and Lisa Goode Crawford, harpsichord. From the opening phrases, the group produced a healthy, focused sound as they passed the lines among the three voices -- two groups of violin and oboe and the continuo group -- with perfect imitation.

Nagy and Montoya's performance of Philidor's *Troisième Suite* for two oboes from 1717 was astonishing. Throughout they seemed to be of one mind as they matched each other's tones and phrases with seeming ease. Additionally, the intonation was spot on.

The full ensemble returned for a performance of Michel de la Barre's *Suite in C* from *Première livre des Trois* from 1707, a traditional baroque suite that begins with a

prelude followed by a series of dances. Again the members of Les Délices offered up a musically intelligent and expertly paced performance that paid close attention to the fact that this is dance music. Following a fun performance of the *Premiere livre de Pieces* of Jaques-Martin Hotteterre for two recorders and continuo, violinist Scott Metcalfe gave a humorous introduction to the *Cinquieme Trio* for two violins and continuo of Jean Fery Rebel, pointing out that the French were suspicious of all things Italian, especially when it came to the sonata, however, there was nothing suspicious about this performance as Metcalfe and Andrijeski perfectly synchronized the four movement piece.

The full ensemble returned for the *Cinquieme Trio* from *Les Nations* by François Couperin, a piece that combines the musical styles of both the French and the Italians. This is a magical piece, one that allowed the individuals as well as the collective to shine. As it was throughout the evening, Les Délices' performance was a model of chamber music playing, producing rich focused sound and impeccable ensemble and intonation.

A special *Brava!* must be given to the amazing continuo playing of Emily Walhout and Lisa Goode Crawford, who not only produced well-shaped and supportive bass lines, but also negotiated some very tricky technical passages with ease.

Whether you are a young string quartet, woodwind or brass quintet or even a jazz combo, you can learn a lot about ensemble playing from listening to Les Délices. It really doesn't get much better than this. In addition to announcing the 2010-2011 concert dates, Debra Nagy also announced that they have been invited to perform at the prestigious Frick Collection in New York in May of 2011.