



## Stephen Waarts, *violinist*

### The Millbrook Independent

#### Krzyzowa: The Music

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Mixing young musicians with seasoned musicians can have the effect of making everyone more attentive, more on edge; the result at this two-week festival, where we heard rehearsals and four evening performances, suggests that the mix can produce utter joy. Pieces that I thought of as tired clichés came alive with brilliant performances.

The final evening, held in the elaborately, laughably Baroque Aula Leopoldina in the university building in the city of Wrocław, Poland, opened with Handel's overture to Suite No. 1 of Water Music. It was a showpiece for Tamás Pálfalvi on trumpet. Pálfalvi studied at Bard's Conservatory of Music, where he played with a group of mostly Hungarian brass players. His trumpeting on Sunday was brilliant—clear, penetrating and perfectly backed up by the strong strings led by Viviane Hagner, the festival's music director.

The final piece of the final evening's performance brought out the talents of a young violinist from California, Stephen Waarts, first violinist in Schubert's String Quintet in C major. His playing was keen, sensitive, personal and fluent. He set the pace, he receded into the background when the voice passed to other players, he was supportive and expressive. He knew the piece cold, seldom even glancing at the score. This piece had been rehearsed by Alfred Brendel, who was smiling approvingly after the performance. Although this quintet suffers from being overplayed, that it is capable of being played at such heights, and with such care, proves its greatness. It is full of fine points, subtle changes in dynamics, lyrical intimacies; the togetherness, the fineness of the individual voices both distinctive and when blended came out, particularly in the slow movement which was both simple and elegant. Waarts is on the roster of Young Concert Artists.

There were many fine moments. Among them were the Serenade for Flute, Violin and Viola by Max Reger, which introduced me to perhaps the best flutist I have heard, Stephanie Winker, a German who studied at Juilliard. Another find was the Hermès Quartet, originally from Lyon, whose members played many of the chamber music pieces. They have won the Young Concert Artists Auditions, played at Zankel Hall, and had two American tours; they have a busy International schedule. Daniel Pytel, a double bass player, impressed for his strong tonalities, which added depth and texture and a certain amount of humor. Mari Lee showed a glowing musical personality in Mozart's Serenade No. 13 in G major, *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*. The robust enthusiasm of Andrej Bielow's violin playing in many pieces was always joyful.

These were but a few of the many performers who made the music of this well-programmed and well-run festival. I must thank Viviane Hagner for conceiving and running this gathering of musicians from around the world, and Matthias von Hülsen and the foundation directors for their supportive work; it was their collective love of music and the small village of Krzyzowa that made it happen.



*Stephen Waarts (left) and Christel Lee (right) brilliantly performed with the Schubert String Quartet in C major. They are playing in the Baroque Aula Leopoldina Hall in Wrocław, a Polish city not far from Krzyzowa.*