

## Here's to symbiotic friendships

By Lisa Talesnick - Vernon Morning Star  
Published: November 24, 2009 7:00 PM

"It was amazing how those violins started out," said my friend and violinist Carole Ruth, of the first notes of Michael Colgrass' *The Schubert Birds* played Sunday night by the Okanagan Symphony Orchestra.

"I've never heard anything like it. The bows sounded like whistling noises barely gripping the string. I wonder what it looked like on the page," the violinist mused.

"What did you think of the Colgrass?" asked Maestra Rosemary Thomson as me and my symphony friends shared notes and nibbles at the reception table after the *Masters of Melody* concert — the second in this 50th anniversary year of the OSO.

My friend Nonie liked being nudged out of her comfort zone of familiar music.

Sylvia was entranced by how "they made the piccolos and violins into birds. Even the horns had some nice bird moments."

Janet, my symphony confidante, loved the exposure to the contemporary pieces.

"It was definitely a tribute to Schubert," Sylvia added about the performance of the composer's *Symphony No. 3 in D Major*, just hot off of Thomson's baton as the evening's finale.

"Schubert, wow!" I blurt. "He wrote right from his cells in this one. How did he do that?" I ask the Maestra.

"He was 18 when he wrote it," she smiled. And with an added gleam said: "He didn't watch TV for hours and hours and hours." Ha!

Walking home with my friend Anna, I persist in trying to grasp how Schubert could reach me at my cellular level. I could feel that music still evoking truths in my body.

"Those were dances," Anna reminded me. Ah, I relax, relieved momentarily from my intellectual pester. The two of us share a passion for the language inherent in dance.

"Music is either a song or a dance," Thomson had said at her pre-concert talk. "That's how I see it. In this piece, even the slow sections, are like dances."

But if one could make music speak, that would be Wolfgang Amadeus.

The evening treated Vernon to Mozart's *Concerto for Flute and Harp* with guest soloists Lorna McGhee and Heidi Krutzen.

This virtuosi duo conversed Mozart so fluently, I wondered what would have happened had Mozart shown up and asked to join in. The nerve of the man!

By stepping out of the way of himself, an artist allows his work to be created. If it's possible that the performers could run away with the show, they did it in this piece. Mozart was upstaged by his own creation.

Imagine a hot pot of tea, fresh cookies, teacups, sugar cubes and conversation so riveting, not even an entire symphony — with its smooth and delicate backing — could get a word in.

McGhee on her flute sustains high notes on a feather and Krutzen's captivating warm sound and clean finger work on harp is an art form in itself to watch. She peeks through her regal harp strings as her friend finishes her own phrase with a trill or two.

Punctuating back with an "I can't believe it" glissando, flowing into another "have you heard of" broken triad interjection, and an "I know what you mean" scale conjures up friends seamlessly finishing each others sentences.

"I don't think I've ever heard a flute played so beautifully," said Thomson.

Harp playing is often harmonizing and flourishing, but Mozart demands detail-oriented work.

"It doesn't matter how you play Mozart," oboist Walt Burton said, "as long as it's perfect!"

These two soloists met 10 years ago playing this piece and forged a friendship and a duo.

I was awed by the in the moment communication. Krutzen is the harp teacher of my friend and harp teacher, the lovely Caroline Mackay. Teaching, friendship and transmission is so immediate in this presence.

"The best kind of friend is the kind you can sit on a porch and swing with, never say a word, and then walk away feeling like it was the best conversation you've ever had." -Unknown

With Mozart's humble permission, I rename this concerto for *Best Friends in T(ea) Major*.

