

## Harp and flute contrast in tribute to composer

By Bill Rice Gazette Reviewer

GLENS FALLS – Harp and flute were the featured solo instruments in a St. Cecilia tribute to composer Alberto Ginastera at the Queensbury Hotel on Friday night.

The flutist was Lisa Hansen, a native Philadelphian who served as principal flutist with the Mexico City Philharmonic. The harpist was Nancy Allen, who heads the harp department at the Juilliard School in New York City.

Peter Bay, principal guest conductor of St. Cecilia, was on the podium, with the program including Ginastera's "Impresiones de la Puna" for flute and strings, Concerto for Harp, String Quartet No.1 and "Variaciones Concertantes."

The flute piece, first on the program, is from the Argentinean composer's early nationalistic period. A very lush romantic work, it was a perfect vehicle for Hansen's flawless playing.

She gets as lovely a sound as you'll ever hear from a flute, and her playing is particularly appealing in the lower register.

The piece is three short movements, the first slow and poignant, the second slightly faster but equally beautiful. The third movement is a delightful romp with the flute fluttering to and fro throughout the orchestra fabric.

Hansen played with conviction and technical ease.

There was a great contrast between the flute work and the Harp Concerto, which was next on the program.

The latter, from the composer's neo expressionistic period, according to program notes, is much more contemporary sounding. Very complex throughout, it is filled with motor rhythms, percussive sounds and fascinating orchestral colors.

The solo harp demands are extremely virtuosic, with the orchestral writing very intense and often dissonant.

Allen's performance was stellar throughout, with her delivery of the swirling third movements cadenza absolutely spectacular.

The Harp Concerto was a tough act to follow, but the Wilde String Quartet, comprised of members of the orchestra, was up to the task.

Members are violinists Philip Spletzer and Rob Taylor, violist Julius Wirth and cellist Douglas Poplin.

The quartet is an extremely difficult work, filled with special effects such as tremolo, glissando and pizzicato. And, in the fast movements, it flies like the wind.

The performance was evidence of just how good the individual members of St. Cecilia are. These four players don't practice together every day, but they played this concert as though they do.

Like athletes in a sporting competition who want their opponents to know they mean business, they opened aggressively and never let up until the last note sounded.

The last movement is filled with tricky pizzicato passages and the notes fell into place perfectly.

The variations, last on the program also shed some light on the individual abilities of the orchestra. The work is a sort of Latin American equivalent of Bartok's great Concerto for Orchestra.

The theme is started by a solo cello with harp accompaniment and then, after a string interlude, different sections have a go at it in seven interesting, and in this case, well performed variations.

The concert was repeated on Saturday night at Union College Memorial Chapel in Schenectady.