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The New York Times

For Marlboro Musicians, at Home or on Tour, Performance Is in the Details

By Vivien Schweitzer, April 25, 2012

"The excellent Marlboro players offered a potent interpretation that conveyed the work's [Bartok's Sixth String Quartet] dark intensity."

Some composers write cheery music while their personal lives are in disarray. Others channel their suffering into angst-ridden compositions, as Bartok did in his String Quartet No. 6. Introducing the piece before a performance by Musicians From Marlboro on Tuesday evening the cellist Marcy Rosen detailed the genesis of the work, written in 1939, shortly before Bartok left his native Hungary and emigrated to America.

Bartok had intended to include an uplifting ending, but his mother died before he finished the quartet. The first three movements open with a section marked with a mournful "Mesto"; a slow lament finishes off the piece. **The excellent Marlboro players offered a potent interpretation that conveyed the work's dark intensity during their concert at the Morgan Library & Museum's Gilder Lehrman Hall.**

Vicki Powell spun out the mournful solo viola introduction with **probing introspection**, a commitment later matched by Ms. Rosen and the violinists, Bella Hristova and Robin Scott.

Intensity is a hallmark of performances by Musicians From Marlboro, the touring ensemble of the Marlboro Music school and festival in Vermont, which celebrated its 60th anniversary last summer. Directed by the pianists Richard Goode and Mitsuko Uchida, the festival offers veteran and emerging artists opportunities to collaborate on repertory of their choosing, with unlimited rehearsal time over a seven-week period.

A remarkable attention to detail and polish invariably results from such dedicated practice. The Marlboro effect was in evidence on Tuesday, beginning with Mozart's String Quintet in E flat (K. 614), which opened the program. Mozart's last major chamber work, written during his final year, this good-natured quintet, with its hornlike hunting calls in the violas, evokes his bright divertimentos for winds.

Musicians from Marlboro

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The violist Dimitri Murrath joined Ms. Rosen, Ms. Powell, Ms. Hristova and Mr. Scott for a **poised and elegantly phrased rendition**, which culminated in a spirited exploration of the closing Allegro.

There was also **plenty of spirit in the lively performance of Schumann's popular Piano Quintet in E flat that concluded the evening, and it was enhanced by expressive, dynamic playing from the pianist Cynthia Raim.**

The program repeats on Saturday at Washington Irving High School, 40 Irving Place, near 16th Street, Manhattan; pscny.org, (212) 586-4680.

Musicians from Marlboro