

ENTERTAINMENT

Baltimore's Trio La Milpa delivers memorable concert in Margate

By ED WISHER
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MARGATE - After Sunday's concert, we can in good conscience add one more entry to the list of good things emanating from Baltimore. In sports, it is the Orioles and Ravens, while in cultural matters, Edgar Allan Poe, H.L. Mencken, the Baltimore Art Museum and Baltimore Symphony must be included in the city's assets.

Trio La Milpa is an important part of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra's on-the-go community outreach. Trio La Milpa is comprised of two oboes and an English horn. Katherine Needleman is the principal oboist of the Baltimore Symphony and is a prize-winning performer. Sandra Gerster plays oboe, oboe d'amore and English horn and performs regularly with the Baltimore and North Carolina symphonies and had engagements around the world. Michael Lisicky is a star wind player and is formerly of the Richmond Symphony. He was also a faculty member of the University of Richmond, and served as principal oboist of the Williamsburg Symphonia and is a former member of the Savannah Symphony.

Lisicky is also a Cherry Hill native whose family owns a summer residence in Somers Point.

Lisicky said the Jersey shore is his second home and that he felt the need for a concert here. He wisely chose the Margate Community Church for the concert, as it has a reputation as a venue for fine musical events.

Trio La Milpa's name is whimsically derived from a favorite meal they enjoyed at a Mexican restaurant they frequented in Richmond, Va. Milpa means "cornfield" in Spanish.

The trio gave a virtuoso performance at the concert. Chamber music enjoyed its greatest popularity in the 17th, 18th and part of the 19th centuries, before the advent of the means to bring music to the masses. Large ensembles didn't often travel and people made the most of ensembles populated by friends and family members. Quality varied to say the least. Today, chamber music has become an acquired taste and its

audience is limited, but the highly esoteric music has its share of avid fans.

When chamber music is presented in such an exemplary and affable ensemble as Trio La Milpa, long time enthusiasts are pleased and

new fans are created. A program that blended familiar music with newer compositions was ideal for making converts. One thing was immediately apparent - the three musicians are masters.

The music was made eloquent by the haunting, if somewhat nasal, sound of the oboes while the more muscular timbre of the English horn provided substance.

Trio La Milpa opened the concert with George Frederic Handel's "Concerto in G minor," arranged from the full orchestra score. The sanctuary was filled by an exceptionally large audience that responded favorably to the Baroque masterpiece. The blending of instruments produced a gratifying, if unaccustomed, sound.

Lisicky enchanted the audience with all kinds of interesting stories about the trio and the compositions that were played. His warmth and humor made him an instant friend to all and probably made new enthusiasts for chamber music. The second piece on the program was Beethoven's "Variations uber La ci darem la mano" from Mozart's "Don Giovanni." The familiar tune brought chuckles from the audience when they heard what Beethoven had creatively done with it.

There was a brief intermission, after which Trio La Milpa returned to play "An

Irish Fantasy" and "Lady Green Sleeves." Both were written or arranged by Jonathan Jensen of the Baltimore Symphony. "An Irish Fantasy" was a very recent work composed specifically for Trio La Milpa. Lisicky's arrangement of the Irish folk hymn "Be Thou My Vision" was well received with its familiar haunting melody.

The concert was completed

with the playing of Hungarian composer Bela Bartok's jolly "Nine Old Dance Tunes" from "Tineot Magyar paraszodal," with toe tapping melodies that made the audience reluctant to see the concert end. The afternoon passed very quickly. The audience had a pleasant opportunity to chat with the musicians following the performance.

