Concert Review: Basset Horn

Tyler Cosley

I had never even heard of a “basset horn” before Longwood. I’ve been involved in band and around concerts for years now, and not once had I heard it mentioned, much less seen it played. College is of course designed to expand horizons, yet I had no idea it would completely introduce me to a brand new (to me), unheard of instrument. It was really neat attending a faculty recital. These recitals are always my favorite concerts to attend at Longwood, and it was all the more special to have Dr. Karnatz, Dr. Kinzer, and Mrs. Callihan on stage in collaboration. It was a very well done concert, and I enjoyed it.

Upon first glance of the program when I sat in my seat that evening, I made note that none of the titles of the pieces were in english. This is to be expected of classical music from earlier time periods, which these pieces were. Most of the composers worked in the early to mid 1800s, and the early 1900s. As a musician, composers such as Schumann and Mendelssohn were easily recognizable, but every other composer was new to me. Musical terms within the titles such as “adagio” or “allegro” (from Schumann) caught my eye, but everything else on the program was unknown. Seeing the title *Adagio and Allegro, Op. 70* helped me infer that this piece would have a slow tempo section, followed by a section with a more brisk tempo.

There seemed to be a very organized way the pieces were performed. They were not ordered chronologically, as the first three pieces jump from the late 1700s, to the 1900s, back to the 1800s. This leads me to believe they were ordered according to style, and feel of the pieces. It has been a while since I have seen the concert now, but I remember it flowing very well in terms of its organization. Nothing felt out of place or out of order, and after hearing the stylistic choices of each I agreed with their placement within the concert. The concert as a whole was formal, but not too formal. In terms of organization, the recital reflected the feeling of a very classic, conventional concert, but Dr. Karnatz allowed the audience to easily connect to the performers by speaking to them directly in an informative, personal way. I appreciated that decision as it made me feel more comfortable and “at home” in the recital, and it made the mood of the concert friendly and fun. I was never lost within the concert, and with the information given by Dr. Karnatz, I was easily able to comprehend everything and follow along. It was also very enjoyable and comforting to see that the performers had a connection to one another. They would smile at each other and acknowledge the other as the pieces ended, and came out onto the stage with a presence of friendship and community, which speaks to the feeling on Longwood’s campus.

As a musician, I am in concerts all the time. More often I am performing, so it is a different experience to be an audience member purely enjoying the music. This was an opportunity for me to sit back, and simply enjoy the live music I was able to experience. I love the feeling of being in a concert hall listening to music, when it is well done, which in this instance, it was very well done. Not so often do I get to sit and listen to three very accomplished instrumentalists, who have for years studied their craft. It brings me great joy to be able to sit and listen to performers who perform quality work. Dr. Kinzer on the piano is always a treat. I could sit and listen to her play for hours upon hours, as the piano is one of my favorite instruments to listen to. The piano is soothing and elegant, much like Dr. Kinzer herself. Mrs. Callihan on the clarinet was extremely cool to hear. Looking back on my concert notes now, I smile looking at an all-capitalized *“MRS CALLIHAN HAS SUCH A BEAUTIFUL TONE”* I wrote listening to the recital. Knowing Dr. Callihan’s ability on the trombone and low brass, I was always curious as to how his wife performed, and I was very impressed. I do not have much experience with clarinet, nor do I know the techniques or abilities required to make it sound good. All I know is when it sounds good, it is one of the most enjoyable instruments to listen to. Mrs. Callihan’s tone in the high and low registers of the horn was beautiful, and her technique was incredible. Moving on to the basset horn, I had no idea what to expect but I was pleasantly surprised. I enjoyed the lower tone and timbre of the instrument. It has a unique sound that sets it apart from the other instruments, but the coolest thing about it was the fact that it was an experience for all of us. We all loved hearing something new and exciting, and it delivered in so many ways.

I was impressed with each and every piece performed. Rare is the day when I leave a concert thoroughly enjoying everything I heard and experienced, but I did when I left the basset horn concert. This enjoyment does not come from my standing relationship with the performers; I can admit to a sense of bias with knowing and working with the musicians on stage every day, but my review and response to the concert is separate from that bias. I enjoyed it immensely. By far, my favorite of the entire night was the spanish piece. Most spanish music is just simply fun, and cool to listen to. I know that is not a “five star” musician review, but whenever I listen to spanish tunes, I just think, “Man, that is cool sounding”. Dr. Kinzer’s part especially was my favorite on that specific tune. I would pay money just to hear and see that one piece in performance again!

So often musicians implement their own stylistic choices based off of their personal interpretation of the music they are playing. I can say without a doubt, I respected, enjoyed, and agreed with every musical decision the performers made when they were playing their music. I appreciated their interpretation, and fully believe they communicated the original composer’s intended emotions and ideas to the audience in an approachable, understandable way. I loved this concert, and can easily say it was my favorite of all the concerts I listened to in my freshman year at Longwood. What an experience, to be able to listen to your professors perform together, introducing something completely brand new to most people. I will be in music as a career my whole life, and I plan on bragging about the fact that I, in my freshman year of college, experienced a basset horn concert.

Word Count: 1168