

## Entertainment

### Review: Newburgh Chamber Music Series

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For the Times-Herald Record

October 13, 2009 2:00 AM

NEWBURGH — In 1909, to honor the 300th anniversary of Henry Hudson's voyage, the Alsdorf family, an eminent group of African-American musicians, presented a concert at Washington's Headquarters. Now on the 400th anniversary, the Newburgh Chamber Music Series honored the Newburgh Alsdorfs with a concert of music, song and dance from a hundred year ago.

Music by the family as well as by other black composers of the period were performed by violinists Carole Cowan and Emily Faxon, violist Valentina Charlap-Evans, cellist Susan Seligman, oboist Joel Evans, harpsichordist Mary Jane Corry and pianist Ruthanne Schempf. Soprano Kira Cotten was also featured. Renee Camus and Alex Bradley added still another dimension by dancing and offering the audience instructions on early 20th-century dances. St. George's Church was the host for this unique Sunday afternoon celebration.

The program began with Ulysses J. Alsdorf's own "Music for the Ter-Centenary Celebration," with three selections: "Dear Hudson-Fulton Days," a medley of "My Country 'Tis of Thee" and other patriotic hymns; "In America"; and "In College Colors," a one-step dance with Camus and Bradley tripping the light fantastic. The audience joined in for choral accompaniment so that everyone knew this would be an afternoon of musical merriment.

Camus and Bradley, from Centuries Historical Dances, next demonstrated popular dancing of the ragtime period before World War I. The snake dip, lame duck, grizzly bear walk, turkey trot and bunny hug were just some of the animal dances involved in the castlwalk, while a maxixe, Brazilian two-step, and a tango introduced the Latin influence of the period.

Fourteen audience members volunteered for instructions on dancing as couples cakewalking in circles in a ballroom. Camus gave a lively lesson on what fun folks had back then in doing more daring capers than their grandparents.

After intermission, Sonata for Violin, No. 3, Opus 1, by Joseph Boulogne, Chevalier De Saint-Georges, an 18th-century black French composer, featured Cowan's exquisite violin playing of the allegro movement with cellist Seligman on bass and harpsichordist Corry supplying flowing continuo. The violin with double-stops and rubato intoned the five-note theme in classic variations worthy of Mozart's emulation.

Soprano Cotten next sang three songs from Scott Joplin's opera "Treemonisha," never performed in his lifetime. "I Want to See My Child" is a tender lyric that Cotten rendered with warmth and clarity; "A Real Slow Drag" is really fast-paced with its coloratura pacing; and "Maple Leaf Rag" is pure Joplin, with pianist Schempf trilling the scales in accompaniment.

"Miniatures for Oboe, Violin and Piano" by William Grant Still offered five brief musical vignettes from Native American lore, Mexican dances, gospel tradition, Peruvian folksong and an old English ballad, "A Frog Went A-Courtin'." Cowan and Evans vied with each other in stretching strings and reedy responses of playful variations.

Finally, Joplin's "Pineapple Rag" and "New Rag" were given a string quartet arrangement that showed how colorful and appealing those syncopated melodic lines are when the audience claps along to the accelerating rhythm.