

# The New York Times

## A School's Students and Leader Take Flight



David Goldman for The New York Times. The Manhattan School of Music's Chamber Sinfonia performing Grieg's Holberg Suite at Zankel Hall.

By STEVE SMITH  
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Preparing young musicians for orchestral careers involves considerably more than teaching them to play their instruments. A rank-and-file member of a professional ensemble needs to be both self-reliant and a team player, conversant with a variety of styles, able to work well with guests and to cope with the demands of unfamiliar music under public scrutiny. In all these areas the Manhattan School of Music Chamber Sinfonia scored high marks in its concert at Zankel Hall on Monday night.

The program opened with a premiere, "A Rush of Wings," by Robert Sirota, the school's president. In an explanatory note, Mr. Sirota described a recent preoccupation with sensations of flying, saying that the new piece was an effort to evoke "the wings of the wind" as cited in several passages from Psalms.

Even without that, Mr. Sirota's goal would surely have been evident in the energetic swoops and airy plummets of his seven-minute piece, fashioned with the clean, angular melodies, tart harmonies, lively syncopations and punchy accents of American Neo-Classicism. Fidgeting strings conveyed a nervy energy under sustained woodwind and brass tones, with glockenspiel, vibraphone and cymbals providing a shimmering patina. As if buffeted by a breeze, the music frequently changed course without losing momentum.

An excellent curtain raiser, the music also sounded useful in the best sense: you could imagine it being fitted to a wind symphony or marching band equally well. Kenneth Kiesler, the conductor, led a clean, animated account, with fine contributions from Yoonshin Song, the concertmaster, and the brass and percussion sections.

The rest of the program was devoted to Romantic visions of Baroque forms and styles. Performing without a conductor, the strings brought a rich, warm, finely blended sound to Grieg's charming Holberg

Suite. A few entrances were slightly smudged, but Daniel Andai, the concertmaster, proved an exemplary leader.

After intermission Mr. Kiesler returned to lead Richard Strauss's "Bourgeois Gentleman" Suite, a luxurious gloss on French Baroque music, created for a German production of a Molière comedy originally scored by Jean-Baptiste Lully. For this, the ensemble was augmented by illustrious faculty members.

Glenn Dicterow, the New York Philharmonic concertmaster, performed that function here; other players from the Philharmonic and the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra filled principal roles. The ensemble playing, while not pristine, had abundant spirit and style, and the benefit to the student musicians was surely substantial.