Out at Interlochen

I recently learned that the Interlochen Summer Arts Camp cut the Early Music Program from their class offerings. Mark Cudek (of Peabody Conservatory and the Baltimore Consort) was the director of this program, and he has a true gift to excite young people about performing early music. Mark’s roster of former Interlochen students is quite impressive and includes Joanna Blendulf (accomplished Baroque cellist and gamba player in the San Francisco area), Michael Gondko (founded Ensemble La Morra in Basel), Sarah Walder (active gamba and Baroque cellist in Europe), Dan Elyar (plays in Apollo’s Fire), Kat Montoya (Ensemble Galleri), and myself (Catacoustic Consort) among others. In his twenty years at Interlochen, Cudek sent many young people to university and conservatory music programs as early music majors and collegium students throughout the country, thereby helping to ensure a future for quality early music performers.

Cudek has a natural talent for motivating young people, transferring his passion and excitement for music to his students. He is a nurturing person, who was perfectly suited to this job. Cudek taught voice, lute, viola da gamba, loud and soft wind band instruments, and combined the young musicians to make incredible musical programs. I still remember performing amazing concerts with talented dancers and actors doing dramatic readings. Our high school ensemble won camp awards for our concerts. I left Interlochen with a passion for Renaissance music, knowing that I wanted to play the viola da gamba and touch people with exciting musical concerts for the rest of my life.

There has been no other place in this country that offered such an opportunity for talented teen musicians to play early instruments in an intense environment (eight weeks) with their peers. Interlochen is planning on going in a different direction by eliminating the early music major and historically informed performance electives. (It appears that Interlochen is eliminating all electives.) It is unfortunate that early music does not fit into this vision.

As a director of an early music ensemble, I have looked to Interlochen to provide a base of young quality early music performers, and I have hired Interlochen alumni for concerts. I have also spoken to several viol professors at universities who are deeply troubled at how this will affect their future programs and quality of students. This is a sad time for those of us in early music.

Annalisa Pappano, Director
Catacoustic Consort, Cincinnati, Ohio

Blast from the past

What a shame John Shortridge cannot appreciate that his audiences might genuinely enjoy the music they have heard enough to inspire them to cheer (“HIP Cheers,” Reader Forum, Winter 2004).

I think it is high time for the cognoscenti to leave their tired ideas of apropos behavior in their 19th-century trunks. If Mr. Shortridge did some research, he would find that audiences in the 17th century jeered, cheered, booed, hollered and carried on in all sorts of ways that he would find unseemly.

Lighten up! We want to encourage the acceptance and enjoyment of early music by everyone. There aren’t enough highbrows around to pay the bills for all the concerts we would like to give. Anyone who wants to carry on in raucous fashion at one of my concerts is more than welcome to do so.

Kevin Sutton
Artistic Director and Conductor
The Helios Ensemble, Dallas, Texas