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Pianist shows beauty of Beethoven

Performance at A&M demonstrates power of composer

By Karl Pallmeyer
Music Critic

Chamber music is designed to be performed for a small audience in an intimate setting.

Pianist Paul Hersh's performance in Rudder Theater Friday was just that — small, intimate and beautiful.

Hersh's performance was the first program of the year sponsored by the University Chamber Series, a joint venture by the College of Liberal Arts, the Department of Philosophy and Humanities and the MSC Opera and Performing Arts Society to bring chamber music to Texas A&M.

About 250 people turned out to hear Hersh play the last three piano sonatas written by Ludwig van Beethoven. As a preview to his performance, Hersh held lectures on the sonatas Wednesday and Thursday nights.

When Beethoven wrote the sonatas, between the years of 1820 and 1822, he was almost completely deaf and had isolated himself from the music world because of his lack of hearing.

From this time to his death in 1827, Beethoven composed some of his most influential works, such as the piano sonatas and the Ninth Symphony.

Hersh began Friday night's performance with the Piano Sonata No. 30 in E Major, Opus



Photo by Bill Hughes

Noted pianist Paul Hersh performs in Rudder Friday night.

109, running through the beginning of the first movement, a fast series of scales that cover most of

the piano's keyboard, with amazing dexterity.

After the introduction, the

movement grew slower and more gentle. The second movement was even faster than the first.

The third movement was so beautiful it left the audience stunned. When Hersh finished playing, there was a brief, reflective pause before the audience began its enthusiastic applause.

At one of the lectures, Hersh referred to Piano Sonata No. 31 in A-Flat, Opus 110 as a spiritual journey. His performance of the piece was indeed spiritual. The first movement seemed to be a simple, straightforward tune but there were several strange jumps of rhythm that Hersh executed with a timid virtuosity.

The rhythm of the second movement was even stranger, and Hersh played the difficult passages clearly without being flashy. The third movement began slowly and picked up in tempo and volume.

After a short intermission, Hersh returned to the stage for Piano Sonata No. 32 in C Minor, Opus 111. The fact that the sonata is comprised of only two movements confused audiences and musicians during Beethoven's time.

The first movement had a grand, urgent feeling with a simple, almost church-like harmony. The second movement was slow and stately but with a sense of nervousness that seemed to give the piece a more human feeling.

Hersh was brought back to the stage by a standing ovation.

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Medicare spawns crisis in rural health care

FORT WORTH (AP) — Nine small-town Texas doctors have been knocked out of the Medicare program, a situation that threatens health care for the poor and elderly in rural areas, physicians and critics say.

As many as 100 doctors are up for disciplinary review, 25 rural hospitals have closed in the past year and small Texas towns are joining their doctors in protest, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram reported Sunday.

During the past year, the Texas Medical Foundation, a private watchdog group under contract to review care provided under the Medicare program, has recommended sanctions against 15 doctors, most in rural areas with many elderly patients.

The foundation has set final hearings for 14 more doctors and is reviewing dozens of others who could face loss of reimbursements from Medicare.

Doctors in Henrietta, Cisco, Knox City, Sulphur Springs, Perryton, Golthwaite, Lockney, Mineola and Kaufman already have lost their Medicare reimbursements through the foundation's hearings.

"The elderly people are afraid," said Carla Powell, president of the Aecher City Chamber of Commerce. "They are used to their doctor,

and they don't want to change," she said. "A lot of innocent people are suffering."

Powell and more than 100 Archer County residents traveled to Dallas last week to attend a hearing for an Archer City doctor under review. Medicare officials now have 120 days to decide his fate.

The Texas Medical Foundation

has a two-year, \$18.1 million contract as Texas' peer review organization and is charged with determining whether hospital care for Medicare patients is appropriate, cost-effective and of good quality.

Rural doctors penalized by Medicare sanctions can lose their rights to care for Medicare patients, who often represent more than half of ru-

ral doctors' practices and 70 percent of their hospitalized patients. Penalized doctors and hospitals also lose their Medicaid reimbursements for care of the poor.

The doctors say urban standards are being applied to the rural hospitals, while foundation officials contend they are only interested in rooting out poor medical care.

Agency: Dam won't harm water snake

BALLINGER (AP) — The Concho water snake will not be harmed by construction of Stacy Reservoir, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has determined.

In its final environmental impact statement, issued last week, the federal agency said the Fish and Wildlife Service has come up with "reasonable and prudent" measures to protect the snake — a roadblock to proceeding with the long-delayed dam project.

The Colorado River Municipal Water District, which plans to build the dam, has agreed to conditions set by the federal government, including the bulldozing of 30 miles of Colorado River shoreline to create more habitat for the snake.

The reservoir would flood about

half of the snake's primary habitat along the Colorado River in Runnels, Coleman and Concho counties.

The project is designed to provide a water supply for Odessa, Big Spring, Snyder, Midland, San Angelo and Abilene.

"Of course we're not pleased with all the conditions, but it boils down to either doing what the Fish and Wildlife recommended or not building the reservoir," said Owen Ivie, the water district's director.

The Corps cannot issue a permit for any project that would jeopardize a species on the nation's threatened or endangered species list.

The only major issue that remains unresolved is how much land suitable for common wildlife such as deer the water district will have to buy, of-

officials said. Federal regulations require the district to give the land to the state to compensate for the acreage it will flood.

The Fish and Wildlife Service wants the water district to buy about 6,000 acres, but water district officials think 3,000 acres would make up for the land the dam will destroy.

"When you're talking about twice the acres, you're talking about twice the money," Ivie said.

The water district recently agreed to pay for a survey of more than 400 historic and prehistoric sites that the reservoir will wipe out. A walk-through survey of the reservoir site revealed arrowheads dating back to 6,000 B.C., dugouts and one of the area's original ranch homes.

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