Peterborough helps Peter Ford celebrate the big 70

Soloist Shelley Brown and director Peter Ford

On September 1, 2007, members of the Peterborough New Horizons Band gathered to celebrate director Peter Ford’s 70th birthday. Flute soloist Shelley Brown played “Syrinx” by Claude Debussy.

The flutist was dressed in black. Her long walnut-brown hair draped over her neck and shoulders. When I first noticed her, she was seated on the edge of the piano bench, waiting to perform. In due time, she was introduced. She rose, took the microphone in her free hand, and addressed the audience. In the midst of her preamble, she stepped out of her sandals and stood barefoot before us.

The church was flooded with late summer sun. Her back was to that light, casting a halo around her form. Gentle breezes filled the room, cooling the invited guests who had met for the occasion.

The crowd fell silent, and after several warmup notes, she began to play. But after only a few bars of music, the player hesitated, then stopped altogether, for no apparent reason. She lowered her instrument and glanced at the guest of honor.

“I’m sorry,” we heard her say. “I’m so nervous playing for you!”

Muted whispers of empathy ensued, and before long the woman resumed playing—an elegantly touching solo with no hesitation, no fear; she swayed gently to her own song. Then the long and gloriously tender final note. She lowered her flute, and we broke into dazed yet hearty applause, releasing an emotion that could not be contained.

It’s been a long time since I’ve heard music as truly beautiful and unaffected as this. Was it a dream? a fantasy? No, others were there. They too saw and heard it.

—Beth Julian
Peterborough New Horizons Band

Survey results

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What changes can you look forward to? You will soon choose, on your renewal form, between receiving an electronic version of the newsletter or hard copy. New members will also have this choice on the membership application.

We are planning a communication network with all of our New Horizons groups. You will see advice articles on our Web site about recruiting and maintaining members, promotional ideas and materials, and working with a wide range of ability and talent.

You will be able to post your group’s music repertoire and concert programs, find a link to NAMM instructions on how to form a 501 (c) (3) organization, and explore NHIMA’s information on forming a corporation and becoming a tax-exempt organization.

So you see, we heard you, and we are embracing your suggestions. We also found 100 percent of your comments supportive.

Thanks again for your input. This is your organization and our desire is to continue to support the growth of Roy Ernst’s vision of opportunities for adults to make music with friends in a nonintimidating, supportive group.

—Iris Othrow
President, NHIMA

For a 23-page summary report of the NHIMA survey, e-mail Iris Othrow at irisothrow@aol.com.

Many survey respondents are concerned about adding members. In the future, look for “Growing Strong Together” on the NHIMA Web site. It will provide recruiting strategies and suggestions for maintaining or increasing your membership.

—Pam Bolton, NHIMA Director