

"Art and Alterity": Instruments Play for Peace

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History makes the case: the arts precede revolutions, catalyze change and inspire progress. As contemporary evidence, one musical act stands out in particular. To employ the arts as instruments of peace is the mission of the Apple Hill Chamber Players. Monday, Feb. 4, they performed at the Bates Chapel as a part of the program "Art and Alterity: Beyond the Other as Enemy in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict."

The Apple Hill Chamber Players, a string quartet supported by the Apple Hill Center for Chamber Music in New Hampshire, founded in 1988, plays for peace. For the past decade or so, they have been on a quest to mitigate conflict through music by traveling to the world's greatest conflict zones.

The quartet, comprised of Elise Kuder, Sarah Kim, Michael Kelley and Rupert A. Thompson performed Ravel's "Quartet in F Major," and Beethoven's "String Quartet in E minor, Op. 59 #2." Each piece was invigorating yet placidly gor-

geous. The players each invoked heavy concentration made obvious by absorbed eye contact and a synchronized sway through which they, as a group, felt the music.

Both the "Quartet in F Major" and the "String Quartet in E minor" were beautiful arrangements of dual solos, passed melodies, powerful dynamics and stinging texture. Although the audience was quick to applaud after the movements (though one should wait until the entire piece is completed), they did not clap after Ravel's third movement, "Tres lent," as not to disrupt the calming peace with which the movement filled the Chapel.

The quartet exemplified magnificent musicianship. Ironically, the music was not the most affecting element of the event. The "Presentation of Playing for Peace," serving as an interlude between the pieces, clearly took center stage of the performance. The quartet's director, Lenny Matczynski, explained their mission: to go to conflict countries and assimilate students on opposite sides of conflicts into musical groups. It is a strategy used to promote communica-

tion between youth in conflict zones.

Why chamber music? Matczynski said that chamber music, unlike orchestral music, relies solely on interpersonal communication – it is a highly democratic form of music. To prove this, he had the quartet play excerpts revealing the importance of cues, solos and intonation.

Cues foster the significance of communication and oneness; solos require musicians to listen to each other and watch; intonation reflects the importance of not just listening, but adjusting. Communication, oneness, listening, watching and adjusting are all central to alleviating conflict and promoting peace, according to Matczynski.

Each member of the quartet then talked briefly of his or her more poignant experiences while playing for peace. The stories left some with wet eyes, some with dear smiles and all were left hopeful.

The Apple Hill Chamber Players personify the arts as tools for progress. As both literal and figurative instruments of peace, they graced Bates' Chapel with unbounded chords of concord.