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# BOSTON GLOBE

MUSIC REVIEW

## Pro Arte ends season on a lighthearted note

**By Richard Dyer, Globe Staff | May 17, 2005**

CAMBRIDGE -- Conductor Isaiah Jackson and the Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra ushered out their season with a cheeky program. Sunday afternoon brought the world premiere of Mark Kuss's "Variations on 'The Oscar Mayer Wiener Song' " and one of Haydn's most audacious musical jokes, the "Farewell" Symphony, which ends with the players leaving the stage in small groups until only two violinists are left playing; even the conductor has slipped away.

Stephen Drury was the soloist in Shostakovich's First Piano Concerto, which Jackson described during the concert as "a hoot." Drury's usual bull's-eye marksmanship was off by a fraction of a percent, but this piece is a good match for his big, biting sound and his iconoclastic temperament. After more than 25 years before the Boston public, Drury's still a rebel with a cause, and he showed up in leather pants and a studded belt. He reveled in all of Shostakovich's rude gestures and broad humor, but presented the serious episodes with dignity. Jackson and the orchestra matched him, and Dana Russian made a lively effect in the big solo trumpet part.

Kuss is a New England Conservatory alum who teaches in Connecticut and is writing a saxophone concerto for Branford Marsalis. His variations on the famous jingle are entertaining, elegant, and nostalgic ("summer cookouts and nitrate-induced migraines -- yum!" he wrote in his program notes).

Most of the Pro Arte regular principals and even whole sections were otherwise engaged, so there was a stageful of substitutes. But there wasn't a significant falloff in quality. Jackson led the Haydn Symphony with restraint and taste. Then in the last big joke, players left their chairs, pulling on baseball caps, putting on headsets, and setting up a picnic with supplies from a Trader Joe's shopping bag. Violinists Barbara Englesberg and Anne Hooper Webb sweetly caroled through to the end.

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