

STYLE

PERFORMING ARTS

Washington Musica Viva

Washington Musica Viva wears the Bohemian mantle well. Its eclectic program of chamber pieces Saturday in a warehouse on Kensington's antiques row conjured emigre audiences following displaced musicians to the lofts of Paris and New York early in the last century.

The ruminating alto of Betty Hauck's viola and Carl Banner's piano launched the program with the engrossing dialogue of Robert Schumann's Op. 70, a work written for French horn and piano to showcase Clara Schumann's keyboard prowess.

Elizabeth Brown played her spellbinding paean to the hermit thrush on a shakuhachi, a bamboo flute on which musical phrases are the length of the player's breath. Mysterious and subtle in its effect, the sound suggested a spirit keening to itself.

"Chronicle," also by Brown, relied on a repeated, halting motif meant to describe a person stumbling—which, Hauck explained, originated from the composer using crutches after a tumble. While the piano underlined dark ruminations, the viola faded off in windy echoes like tremulous flute drafts.

For "Clapping Music," by Steve Reich, poet David Cheng and pianist Banner stifled a natural instinct to laugh during this exercise in manual percussion. The fun continued after intermission with youthful high jinks in "Brown Party of Two," arranged for flute and viola with voice and a variety of kitchen tools. The most successful movement, "The Kitchen at 4 a.m.," replicated the room's nervous hush in a duet using toy accordion and viola.

With Brown on flute, the trio closed by playing Op. 3 by Maurice Durufle, an early 20th-century French composer best known for his Requiem and various organ pieces.

—L. Peat O'Neil