

The October 23 concert by Musica Viva at the Atlas Performing Arts Center featured music by composers born or living in Washington, DC, and many DC area composers were present in this full house that also drew poets, artists, singers, and musicians.

Topping the bill were two significant contemporary works Scott Wheeler's chamber music composition "Dragon Mountain" and Maurice Saylor's song cycle "Alta Quies." Wheeler, who now lives in Boston, conducted the able chamber ensemble of June Huang on violin, Betty Hauck on viola, Jodi Beder on cello, and Carl Banner on piano. The piece, although Celtic in inspiration, evokes the magic of Asian dragons. The lyric music is also full of surprises that keeps the mind bright with eagerness to know where the composer will take the ear. Saylor's song cycle based on the poetry of A.E. Housman was blessed by the agile voice and precise enunciation of Gary Poster who rose impressively to the challenge of both and high and low notes.

Michael Strand's tango song "My Soul is Dark" based on the poetry of Lord George Byron was dashing rendered by Gary Poster's bass voice.

The featured poet was Kyi May Kaung who presented a short video by Lisa DiLillo that blended images of Burma with Kaung's poems. Kaung's work is political and often mines texts found on the internet which she translates.

Stay tuned for the next Atlas-Musica Viva event scheduled for March. The Atlas is located at 1333 H Street NE, right next door to the new Joy of Motion studios. Marilyn Banner's art show of musical images is now on display there. She uses an age old technique that involves bees wax and heat application. Plan a lunch time visit because on the other side of the Atlas is the Phish Tea Café, a fine lounge serving creative and tasty Caribbean food.

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