



A BIT OF BACH IN THE BUSH — Flutist Donna Stewart of the Arctic Chamber Orchestra performs a classical Bach flute solo to a capacity crowd at a bush concert in the village of Hughes.

The twenty-four member orchestra recently completed a statewide tour, of which they said, "Hughes was the high point."

— Photo by JAMES KOWALSKY

24-Member Arctic Chamber Orchestra Tours Bush

HUGHES — The climax of the third Alaska Tour of the Arctic Chamber Orchestra was a performance given October 1 in the remote village of Hughes in interior Alaska.

A chartered C-46 set down

in the ruggedly beautiful terrain, cutting its engine on the short runway of the small Native village, about 50 miles south of the Arctic Circle. The cargo — twenty-four members of the chamber group of the University of Alaska Music Department and the University-Fairbanks Symphony Association.

With a fresh blanket of snow covering the area, many villagers came out to welcome the orchestra, on the last leg of their 2500 mile tour. The itinerary included Palmer, Anchorage, Seward, Kenai, Homer, Kodiak, and Fairbanks.

Village schoolteachers Ray and Barbara Bane played a large role in arranging a concert in a village of slightly less than a

hundred people. Now they led the disembarked musicians, with their black cases of many shapes, to the school building where the concert would take place in the afternoon.

As violinists, cellists, and

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wind players took out their instruments and made the first tentative and intriguing sounds of tuning and warming up, curious school children gathered around, fascinated. These were the first performers of classical music to visit their village.

Conductor Gordon Wright made informal comments before each piece, some times referring to pictures of classical instruments the children had put up beforehand on the blackboard.

The audience listened quietly and applauded generously. The orchestra performed several movements of Symphony Number 6 in D Major by Joseph Haydn, Quiet City by Aaron Copland featuring soloists Candy Down on the English Horn and James Kowalsky on Trumpet. Paul Rosenthal, Concertmaster, gave a virtuoso performance of

the Mozart Concerto in D Major for Violin and Orchestra.

The villagers, who asked the orchestra to come again and play for them, gave a potlatch for the orchestra, featuring moose head soup and other delicacies.

Conductor Wright said of the concert, "I think what we communicated in Hughes was our joy in playing. We didn't come to bring the truth to them but to share what we enjoy doing."

Referring to Native traditions, Wright said, "This is our tradition and our background. Many Natives view the white man in terms of a caterpillar tractor."

If word spreads through the bush as it often does, by word-of-mouth, of the twenty-four people, all playing together, who made music in Hughes, there may be a growing number of concerts in places where Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, and Haydn were never heard before.