

**The Four Freshmen Shine  
at Schein Hall, Sanibel, Florida**  
by Harold Lieberman, Professor of Music  
emeritus at Ramapo College of New Jersey  
(submitted by Ted Sekela, Warren, OH)

There are some things that improve with age - wine, a Guarnerius Strad violin, fine jewelry, a Monet painting, a loving relationship and the Four Freshmen. For more than 50 years this four-man vocal/instrumental group has delighted audiences, and last Saturday night's concert at Schein was no exception. Sponsored by Fifth Third Bank and Henderson, Franklin, Starnes & Holt, P.A., the packed BIG ARTS audience was "blown away" with the excitement. Many of tonight's audience were fans from the Four Freshmen Fan Club and came from as far away as Virginia. At intermission, I encountered several ladies who confessed that they were viscerally affected as they recalled their youthful adventures and romances magically conjured up by these four performers.

The Freshmen's repertoire consists of pure vocal gems - songs that have stood the test of time and are simply classic. Their interpretations of these classics attest to their highly developed vocal production, keen ears and understanding of the pop/vocal idiom. The blend of their voices with impressive intonation and the close harmony of voices deceptively moving in complex harmonic linear fashion provides the height of an aesthetic musical experience. It is so satisfying to hear and see artists who genuinely love what they do and do it so well.

The Four Freshmen - Brian Eichenberger, lead singer, guitar and bass; Curtis Calderon, 2nd voice, trumpet, flugel horn and guitar; Vince Johnson, 3rd voice, bass, guitar, trombone and whistle; and Bob Ferreira, 4th voice and drums - are four young men who carry on the Freshmen tradition that started in 1948 and that, over the years, has had 22 musicians who were Four Freshmen.

The first selection was "Day In, Day Out" with an extraordinary trumpet solo by Calderon. I can't say enough about this young man's trumpet and flugel horn playing. His sound, technique, range, jazz improvisation and, above all, his feeling for the songs are first-rate. On flugel horn he almost looks and sounds like the late Chet Baker who exuded soulful warmth and feeling. His trumpet solos, especially "After You've Gone," an extremely fast temp rendition, allowed Calderon to "stretch-out" and display his virtuosic technique reminiscent of the great jazz trumpeter, Charlie Shavers, who in the '40s, essentially owned that song. There are not enough superlatives to describe the instrumental and vocal contributions displayed by Curtis Calderon during this concert.

All told, 28 songs were presented in various guises and styles. "You Stepped Out Of A Dream" - featuring a great bass/vocal solo a la Slam Stewart by Johnson - led to "Invitation," a tune with difficult intervals yet sung with flawless intonation. Next was an uptempo "Young And Foolish," followed by a sensuous rendition of "You Got Me Cryin" that featured a beautiful warm flugel horn solo laden with soulful "Bakerish" nuances. "If I Only Had A Brain" featured effective and tasteful whistling by Johnson. The spectacular group's phrasing of "Angel Eyes" also featured

Calderon's technical virtuosity when the arrangement shifted to a fast, double-time tempo. He was also able to display his excellent range and control on a brisk uptempo, "Somebody Loves Me."

An a capella introduction led into "I Could Have Told You" followed by "Rain," which showcased a well-crafted unison guitar and flugel horn obligatto behind the vocals. "Around The World" with an almost Reggae-type rhythm led into another a capella vocal introduction to Victor Herbert's "Indian Summer," which once again displayed a keen sense and use of dynamics with weaving inner voices sung in tight, close harmony. Old chestnuts followed as the group sang and played "Skylark" (with a soulful whistle by Johnson) and the last tune before intermission, "Everytime We Say Goodbye," featuring another spectacular double-time trumpet solo by Calderon.

After intermission, roles were reversed as the electric standup bass was now in the hands of Eichenberger and the guitar was played by Johnson. Songs played were: "Poinciana," dressed as a bolero, "Route 66" and "Wide World," which ended the reversed roles of guitar and bass players.

With Brian back on guitar and Vince on bass, an uptempo "Something's Got To Give" swung into a Four Freshmen rendition of "Mamselle." An a capella intro led into "That Old Feeling" with Johnson once again whistling a well crafted, improvisational solo. With just a guitar accompaniment, the group sang "How Can I Tell Her?" that featured Vince on the trombone (how he could pick up this brass instrument and play it "cold" was an impressive feat!) and "There Will Never Be Another You" - followed by "You've Changed" with Brian and Curtis on vocals. A Four Freshmen oldie, "It's A Blue World" was followed with drummer/vocalist Bob Ferreira poignantly singing "How To Keep The Music Playing" backed by a touching flugel solo by Calderon. The concert closed with a blazing "After You've Gone," once again with a Slam Stewart-type bass solo by Johnson.

As expected, the standing ovation insisted upon an encore and they obliged by leaving their microphones to stand at the front of the stage and sing, accompanied by just guitar and bass, "We'll Be Together Again."

The four talented musicians were brilliant not only in their musical performance but also in their stage presence, displaying humor and banter. Kudos to Eichenberger, lead singer whose top voice led the group through the maze of close harmony; Johnson who is not only able to synchronize his well-placed voice with his bass notes but is most skilled in blending his complex innervoice parts smoothly. Ferreira, besides possessing a warm baritone also radiates a visual warmth and command and is most adept on drums. Vocalist, flugel hornist and trumpeter Curtis Calderon is in a class by himself - he is quite a talent.

It was a wonderful and memorable concert and a treat to hear polished, well-rehearsed, confident and joyful artists. Many thanks should be given to the hardworking BIG ARTS workers, especially John Friedman and the music committee, for bringing the Four Freshmen to Sanibel.