

Chamber Orchestra Produces Fine Entertainment

By David Skolnik Special to The Gazette - • Updated: November 24, 2013 at 2:12 pm • Published: November 24, 2013 • 0



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their voices were still clear and expressive.

Both "The Adoration of the Magi," with its exotic ancient biblical reverberations, and "The Birth of Venus," with its engaging beauty, fared well. Now, free from technical concerns, the performance revealed layers of expression as if we were actually viewing Botticelli's Renaissance masterpieces.

The "Suite for Cello and Orchestra" by Camille Saint-Saëns moved us to France. Wilson had his players produce a light and concise touch to match the temperament of the music. In the spotlight was principal cellist Gerald Miller who played the first four movements with great charm and free of unnecessary histrionics. Although the entertainment peaked in the third movement "Gavotte," both cellist and orchestra beautifully rendered the following "Romance." As was true of everything on the program, there was no hint of pathos. All that was asked of the audience was to simply enjoy the music.

The "Tarantella" finale made that somewhat difficult to accomplish. Miller was challenged by the tempo and tonality of this wild rhythmic ride although the excitement still won out.

After a lovely reception (the chamber orchestra dispenses with convention and meets their public mid-concert) the move was to British Empire and Edward Elgar. Again setting just the right tone, Wilson had his forces project the tempered romanticism found in the composer's "Serenade for Strings." At first, the violins labored in the opening movement. But the evening's first real magic was in the beautiful second movement. This was a sumptuous sound that seemed to stop time. The finale continued in this rarefied air.

The master craft of Frenchman Maurice Ravel was chosen to close the program. His "Le Tombeau de Couperin" is expression of the most sublime. It stays free from high drama preferring to dwell in the realm of delicacy and poignancy. Wilson chose the conventional brisk tempo for the "Prélude" but his players had trouble realizing it. Oboist Angie Burtz, who had been brilliant in the Respighi, now labored to float her sound. She would handily redeem herself in the concluding movements. By the "Forlane" the music had evolved into superior conversation between all parts of the orchestra. The "Minuet" featured exquisite playing from Burtz with well-conceived additions from all the winds and horns. The final "Rigaudon" put the perfect exclamation point on this evening of fine entertainment.

"Pure Elegance"

Who- The Chamber Orchestra of the Springs, conductor Thomas Wilson, cello soloist Gerald Miller

When- 2:30 p.m. Sunday

Where- First Christian Church, 16 E. Platte Ave.

Tickets- \$20; \$17 - seniors, \$5 - 24 and under.

Next Concert- "The Bold Baroque" January 25 and 26 featuring music of Bach, Handel, Lalande and Mouret

Grade- B-

It's a funny thing in the performing arts. We go to see dancers, actors and musicians who have spent most of their lives working tirelessly to perfect their craft. And yet, any sign that they might be engaged in "process" can undermine the impact of the experience.

The majority of the music making at Saturday night's "Pure Elegance" from the Chamber Orchestra of the Springs avoided this pitfall. Still, there were moments in all four of the works on the program where process laid itself bare and the seams of the product were visible.

We began in Italy with Ottorino Respighi's "Three Botticelli Pictures." Inspired by conductor Thomas Wilson, the first violins burst out of the starting gate to capture the spirit of "Spring." The wild flourishes made great demands on the entire string section and the spontaneity of the sounds was compromised. Impressive, though, was the orchestral balance. There was no doubling of the winds and trumpet and