

A triumphant performance by Chamber Orchestra of the Springs

by david skolnik Special to The Gazette - • Updated: February 27, 2014 at 9:52 am • Published: February 27, 2014 • 0

On Saturday night at First United Methodist Church, the Chamber Orchestra of the Springs proved itself to be all grown up.

Through its 30 years of existence, the organization has had plenty of trials and tribulations - even reaching a point when its bank account was virtually empty. As the musical exclamation mark was placed on the conclusion of Beethoven's "9th Symphony," there was no doubt that it's all been worth it.

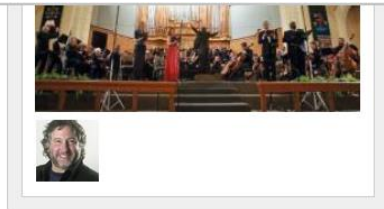


The concert started with music director and conductor Thomas Wilson's orchestral arrangement of Morten Lauridsen's choral work "O Magnum Mysterium." Bolstered by the worship hall's excellent acoustics, the orchestra lovingly rendered a seamless and sultry sound.

Guest artists the Colorado Vocal Arts Ensemble added to the aural experience with Lauridsen's "Mid-Winter Songs," which was conducted by their artistic director, Deborah Jenkins Teske. A problem at the outset: The lush orchestration obscured the all-important poetry of Robert Graves. The sound being produced was quite beautiful, though, and, as the work progressed, the clear sound and immaculate diction of the vocal ensemble found its way through the soundscape.

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Although noticeably smaller than what is normally cast for Beethoven's epic masterpiece, the chamber orchestra was as large as I've seen it - augmented by local professionals.

This was not the fire-breathing dragon, but more a romantic interpretation. Although missing some of the sense of shock the composer intended, the sound was concise and with a

clarity that left nothing obscured. Wilson rang a surprisingly full-blooded sound from his players, which paid big dividends when the climax of this angry beast of a movement was scaled.

Although the orchestra produced an engaging delicacy when called for, missing from this and the second movement scherzo was their ability to play with hushed intensity. There were also a few times when some of the players did not follow their conductor's graceful ends to phrases.

Still, the die was cast. As it should be, the adagio was the most potent expression of the evening. Wilson let the music sing and the orchestra never wavered in its intensity and passion. Led by clarinetist Jay Norman, horn player Jennifer Doersch and the silky sound of the violins, a beautiful meditation on what is most holy about humanity was shared.

Then, the party that is the symphony's finale. It was a thrilling ride. The basses and cellos set the tone, which was matched by the orchestra and the vocal forces who later joined in.

There were occasional issues. The quartet of soloists were, at times, off rhythm (kudos to Katherine Adam Johnson for stepping in at the eleventh hour to bring her beautiful soprano to the festivities).

At first overmatched, the Vocal Arts Ensemble powered its way through the massed sound with impressive focus. Its only misstep was a lack of solidity from the men during their most demanding phrases.

All in all, a triumph. It's impossible not to be excited about what the future holds for us all from this now-mature orchestra.

Chamber Orchestra of the Springs

Next: Season finale: "New Traditions"

When: 7 p.m. April 26 and 2:30 p.m. April 27

Where: Broadmoor Community Church, 315 Lake Ave., and First Christian Church, 16 E Platte Ave., respectively

Tickets: \$20, \$17 seniors, \$5 24 and under; 633-3649, chamberorchestraofthesprings.org

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