

Jay Harvey Upstage

Sunday, May 17, 2015

Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra plays a stylish, scintillating farewell concert for Kirk Trevor

Orchestra music directors' tenures rarely exceed a quarter-century, so when the Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra and Kirk Trevor concluded his 27th season at the helm of the ensemble Saturday night, the milestone was worth celebrating. Gifts, testimonials, and several champagne toasts highlighted a post-concert reception at the Schrott Center for the Arts, Butler University.

Bella Hristova, Laureate of the 2006 International Violin Competition of Indianapolis, was the soloist for the season-ending concert. She was heard in Nicolo Paganini's sturdy, showy, episodic Violin Concerto No. 1 in D major, op. 6. Hristova displayed the virtuoso command the score requires. Her harmonics had a steady sheen, articulation was varied and well laid out, and the interval leaps in the fast movements had a high degree of accuracy.

Her choice of first-movement cadenza was not to my taste — chockful of trills and laborious ornamentation of the secondary theme — but this kind of concerto invites technical excess. If you can bring it off, why not go for maximum display? And so she did. From the outset, she sensibly joined the ICO in the tuttis. The rapport between orchestra and soloist was consistent, Trevor indicating again his sympathetic accompaniment practice.

A wild, far-ranging "traditional Bulgarian dance," as Hristova announced it, made for a fiery, rhythmically intricate encore bringing to the fore the violinist's family background.

The vibrant acoustics of the Schrott gave extra clarity and color to the curtain-raiser, the first suite from Manuel de Falla's ballet "The Three-Cornered Hat." The rhythmic acuteness of the string sections turned them into a supplementary percussion section, especially in "Dance of the Miller's Wife."

More varied challenges were presented by a full performance of the incidental music to "A Midsummer Night's Dream," by Felix Mendelssohn. Trevor kept theatrical narrator Jeff Swensson, the women of Encore Vocal Arts, and the ICO in close coordination. A full sense of Mendelssohn's response to Shakespeare's fantasy-comedy was communicated in a manner that excerpt performances can't well represent.

The beating of fairy wings in the violins, a major feature of the Overture that is recalled later, often came across as a blur. But otherwise, this was a well-integrated performance, with some good bassoon, horn, oboe, clarinet and flute spotlights.

The sweet, ingratiating women's choruses invited the listener right into fairyland as the Encore Vocal Arts chorus and two soloists dispatched them. The melodic finish of such writing brought to mind the likelihood that Arthur Sullivan, in his collaborations with W.S. Gilbert, may have owed as much to Mendelssohn as he clearly did to Offenbach.

The grandeur and sensuousness of the full Wedding March, so often clipped and bowdlerized in American wedding ceremonies, were a pleasure to revel in as the ICO played it. Apart from a narrative manner that thumped out the accents in Shakespeare's lines at the expense of meaning, the whole package Trevor put together for his concert finale here was a treasure from first to last.

<http://jayharveyupstage.blogspot.com/2015/05/indianapolis-chamber-orchestra-plays.html>