

Southeastern Ohio Symphony a musical treasure

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FOR THE DAILY JEFFERSONIAN

NEW CONCORD — Ordinary people often live ordinary lives. They go about their work, rear their families, and enjoy their friends. Periodically, however, something extra-ordinary comes into their lives and lifts their spirits to new levels of appreciation and enjoyment. The opening concert of the 2006-2007 season of the Southeastern Ohio Symphony Orchestra on the evening of 29 October 2006 in Brown Chapel proved to be one of those periodic extra-ordinary events for those fortunate enough to be among the audience in the packed house.

For a community the size of Cambridge-New Concord-Zanesville, and serving the entire Southeast Ohio region including surrounding areas Coshocton, Marietta, et al, to have an orchestra of this caliber and under the direction of a professional of the quality as Maestra Laura E. Schumann is not only a tribute to the members of the orchestra and Ms. Schumann but also to all the community members who support such a positive addition to the quality of life in the community as a whole.

After a traditional beginning of the Star Spangled Banner with concert-goers standing to sing, the opening selection was Ayre for Strings, written by a leading American composer, Dr. M. J. van Appledorn who lives in Lubbock, Texas. Although not technically as challenging as the second part of the program, this light romantic piece for strings provided a lyrical, ear-pleasing beginning with only a hint of the dissonant harmonies often associated with much contemporary music.

Transition from a contemporary selection to the work of Mozart in the 1700s seemed smooth as soloist Marsha Palmer stepped onto the stage for the Concerto in D Major for Horn and Orchestra. With little fanfare, Ms. Palmer signaled she was ready and Maestra Schumann lifted her baton. The orchestra began and soon the soft, distinctive sound of the French horn filled the hall. The concerto is not greatly complex in structure but truly showcases the horn's distinctive quality. The hauntingly beautiful tones of Ms. Palmer's horn sang throughout the concerto with the repetition of the simple theme in numerous variations. Never did the familiar clear horn sound falter as Ms. Palmer wove her way through both the Allegro and Rondo movements with practiced skill and sensitivity much to the pleasure of the audience. Her performance was enhanced by the conductor's complete awareness of the soloist's lead. As the last sounds floated away, the audience rose in a tribute to Ms. Palmer's performance with an appreciative standing ovation and presentation of fresh flowers to the soloist.

After the intermission, the orchestra again warmed up and returned for Beethoven's third symphony known as the Eroica Symphony in four movements. Ms. Schumann turned to the audience and spoke of the heroic composition explaining that the music is about heroes and the heroes of the composition are the soaring French horns that sing of those ideas of heroes and death and wonderment, and even of lighter events in the everyday lives of ordinary people. These are the people who become the heroes to their families, friends, and people

they have never met.

This symphony is not a simple composition to play. In fact, it is deceptively complicated, but once again, the members of the orchestra rose to the occasion under the leadership of Ms. Schumann to bring a moment of great beauty to those who had made their way to Brown Chapel the evening of October 29th. The first movement, Allegro con brio, was well done with a fervor the movement demands; the horns gave substance to the heroic promise to come and the double basses provided a solid foundation on which the rest of the orchestra could build. But it was during the second movement, the Marcia Funebre, the Funeral March, the orchestra reached a peak in performance maintaining the high level of tension throughout the movement broken only with a short period of reflective melodies of happier times before returning to the closing drama of the funeral march. It was during this second movement the orchestra showed the depth of its potential under the leadership of Dr. Schumann.

Even though every note of every member of the orchestra may not have been exact, the musicality of Beethoven's Symphony No. 3 was maintained at a high level, a feat many larger professional orchestras often fail to attain. Almost immediately, the depth of understanding of the music and the passion with which it should be played are apparent in Maestra Schumann's style and method of interpreting the music both to the musicians and to the audience. Much of music is about the passion and creativity composers bring to a composition and the passion and virtuosity a conductor and the musicians bring to their

performance. Ms. Schumann's understanding of musicality and its importance in the performance is extra-ordinary. As a result, the musicians in the orchestra are more aware to the musicality of a composition and are more inspired to bring this to their audience.

The third and fourth movements of the Sinfonia Eroica, were performed with the swift lightness needed to bring the Scherzo alive. Then the inspirational final tribute of the fourth movement was paid with passionate feelings to the heroes in the lives of all ordinary and extra-ordinary people, including those in the audience in Brown Chapel.

At a time in the history of the country as a whole and Ohio in particular when noble values seem to be faltering, the content of this opening concert of a new season was so appropriate to remind concert-goers of beauty in simplicity, of the nobleness that can be found in predictable themes and variations when performed by a consummate soloist, and of the elegant statement of the value of heroes and ideals not only in music but in the lives of ordinary man in an extra-ordinary moment.

The 2006-2007 season of your Southeastern Ohio Symphony Orchestra, under the baton of Laura Schumann and the dedicated musicians of the orchestra, promises to bring much enjoyment to your community. Don't miss out on this season-long treat; buy your tickets now to support this community-wide treasure.

(Dr. A. Isabelle Howe, a free-lance arts writer, is from Lubbock, Texas, who was visiting Ohio when she attended the opening concert of the Southeastern Ohio Symphony Orchestra.)