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East /West Boca Raton, Highland Beach, Delray Beach, Deerfield Beach, FL - April 11, through April 17, 2014 • Year V • Number 181

A Triumphant Season Finale for Symphonia Boca Raton



By *Skjip Sheffield*

The Symphonia Boca Raton ended its 2013-2014 season on a triumphant note Sunday, April 6 with an all-Mozart program under the baton of guest conductor Gerard Schwarz.

Schwarz is quite a contrast with previous guest conductor James Judd, who has let his graying hair grow quite long, and is constantly moving about, coaxing the players, looking more like a rock star.

In his conservative charcoal gray suit, white shirt and trim haircut, Schwarz looks more like a CEO than musical maestro. Make no mistake though, Schwarz knows his stuff, as he ably proved on Mozart's intricate, seven-movement Serenade No. 9 in D major, K 320.

As gorgeous as was the No. 9, the real highlight of the afternoon was Clarinet Concerto in A major, K 622. Soloist Jon Manasse doesn't just know this piece, which he played entirely from memory, he lives, breathes and feels deeply this late composition- Mozart's only clarinet concerto, written for his friend Anton

Stadler, who was the finest clarinetist of his time.

The joy of classical music is that when it is really working, everyone feels the emotion. Manasse, who is on the Lynn University faculty and is co-artistic director (with pianist Jon Nakamatsu) of the Cape Cod Chamber Music Festival, was rewarded with one of the most enthusiastic and heartfelt standing ovations I have even seen at a classical music concert. Though the Symphonia audience skews older, Manasse's performance was invigorating for even the most elderly patron.

It was hard to miss some young and beautiful members of the audience. After intermission Symphonia President Steven L. Pomeranz revealed the young people were special invited guests: dancers from HARID Conservatory, a world-class dance school adjacent to Lynn University.

It just so happened to be the birthday of Symphonia benefactor Martin B. Stein, who was duly serenaded by the orchestra and the entire audience. Bravo Mr. Stein, for all your good work.

While this year's season is over, season subscriptions for the forthcoming tenth anniversary season are now on sale. The four concert season features guest conductor David Kim, concertmaster of the Philadelphia Orchestra Dec. 21; Gerald Schwarz returning Jan. 11; Alexander Platt returning Feb. 22, and the passionate James Judd returning April 12.

"I just saw the New York Philharmonic last week," remarked my older friend, author and radio host Hal Spielman. "These musicians are every bit as good."

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