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ENTERTAINMENT MUSIC

Review

Concert fit for a queen



By Murray Charters
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The Queen was treated most royally Sunday afternoon at Brant Community Church in Brantford. The Grand River Chorus under Richard Cunningham combined with the Cambridge Symphony Orchestra under Sabatino Vacca to present A Coronation for our Generations as a celebration precisely on the day of the 60th anniversary of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II at Westminster Abbey.

A large and enthusiastic crowd was there to listen to the music. Audience members showed their British pride through their dress and their flags-and also their noise at, of course, only the proper moments.

This was a well-considered and balanced program. There was some fine a cappella choir singing, some good orchestral pieces, and some rousing bits, including choir, orchestra, organ and, occasionally, the audience, as well. The program moved nicely through some of the more solemn pieces performed at the coronation and then went on to a more boisterous last-night-at-the-proms spirit.

The concert began with what many in attendance might remember as standard business at public events in years past: standing for the

national anthem. In this case we made up for recent lapses by hearing both the old royal anthem and the newer national tribute. And they were both splendidly done in triumphant form, although there was a fair bit of warble in soloist Rachel Cleland's voice and an uncomfortable tempo change demanded by Cunningham at one uneasy point.

The CSO sounded very pleasing in Walton's Crown Imperial March, Handel's Entrance of the Queen of Sheba, and Elgar's Nimrod variation from his Enigma Variations, their main solo numbers. Vacca leads them with a graceful elegance which suggests complete trust in the musicianship of his players, and they naturally respond with their very best. The delicate and slow-moving Nimrod in particular was played with very deep expression and control throughout.

Naturally for a modern community orchestra the CSO is strongest in the brass with some notably good trumpet playing. But the woodwinds also sounded well-especially the two oboes in Handel's busy piece-and the relatively small body of strings plays with a strength and precision which allows them to balance quite well over all.

The GRC, alone, with organ accompaniment from Ann-Marie MacDairmid, and with orchestral accompaniment, sounded at the peak of its form. The control of dynamics, evident in several of these dramatic pieces for a grand public occasion, was superb. Soprano Jane Duncan's sweet voice was absolutely charming as soloist in the lovely communion hymn first heard 60 years ago, O Taste and See by Ralph Vaughan Williams.

Members of the audience enormously enjoyed this event, especially when allowed to sing along in the Promenade standards, Jerusalem, Rule Britannia (curiously misspelled in the program), and the irrepressible Land of Hope and Glory. In fact the enthusiasm of some spilled right over into singing along with the well-received and well-deserved encore of the Hallelujah Chorus from Messiah by that great non-English English composer, Handel.

The former Wesley Methodist Church was positively bursting with patriotic red, white and blue, and with people proud of the musical abilities of these two fine local groups.

Murray Charters is a musician, teacher and writer whose regular column, "Murray's Music," can be found each Saturday in The Expositor.

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