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Monday, June 25, 2007 | Updated at 6:19 AM EDT

Oboist shines in community orchestra concert

AMY FULLER

(Jun 25, 2007)

For the fun of it. That's why the Cambridge Community Orchestra plays music, according to their website.

"Fun" need not preclude "serious," though, if their concert at Forward Baptist Church on Saturday night was any indication.

A great deal of hard work and commitment from the volunteer musicians and their new professional conductor, Sabatino Vacca, went into producing a repertoire of high calibre.

Orchestra members hold varied jobs: graduate student, restaurant manager, retired teacher, electronics technician and parrot trainer for the African Lion Safari, among others. What brings them -- and their listeners -- together is a shared love of music. They play for fun and with skill.

Entitled Beautiful and Bold, the program featured works by Beethoven, Grieg, Marcello and Haydn.

The first half of the concert was perhaps more beautiful than bold, however, opening with the Allegro section of Beethoven's Egmont Overture Op. 84.

Subdued sound gradually grew stronger and the violin section



BERNARD WEIL, TORONTO STAR

Conductor Sabatino Vacca of the Cambridge Community Orchestra.

carried the melody into a fine denouement highlighting winds and brass.

The Tempo di Mazurka movement of Anitra's Dance from Peer Gynt Suite No. 1 Op. 46 by Edvard Grieg followed.

Like the Beethoven number, Anitra's Dance is incidental music written for a play and now often performed on its own.

Concert Master and Wilfrid Laurier graduate James Moat led the strings into pizzicato delicacy at the outset and through the ensuing tension of the story as Peer, the protagonist, loses his ill-gotten riches to seductive Anitra. The music manipulated listeners' expectations at the end to convey Peer's shock at Anitra's trickery.

Oboist Katrina Lisa Liddell took centre stage for the most memorable portion of the concert: the Oboe Concerto in C minor, a piece attributed to composer Benedetto Marcello.

Liddell plays expressively and with a wide dynamic range. Her performance was solid and confident. She produced a consistently round, sweet sound, and the tempo of each movement felt comfortable, never rushed. Trills seemed effortless, while drawn-out notes received special attention.

Vacca's conducting ensured that the strings came to the forefront at times and then yielded to the oboe again, creating a lovely balance between soloist and supporting instruments.

Vacca is a classy, modest conductor. Through each piece, the measured dips and pokes of his baton kept the tempo and dynamics steady. He indulged in no leaping or head-shaking -- only controlled movements which ensured that everyone's focus was on the music. And he was careful to recognize his musicians.

After the oboe concerto, he asked the orchestra to rise and took Liddell's hand for a double bow.

Post-intermission, Haydn's Symphony No. 104 added boldness to the beauty of previous numbers, with the wind and brass sections returning to the stage for the opening Adagio movement.

The flutes then led the rest of the orchestra into the bright, energetic passages of the Andante. Violas supplied gripping downbeats and violins played see-saw notes in unison.

Finally, in the Allegro Spiritoso, percussion and brass sustained the repeated theme. At the end, the players greeted well-deserved applause with relaxed smiles.

NEXT CONCERT

The Cambridge Community Orchestra's will perform:

Saturday, Nov. 3, at Forward Baptist Church, 455 Myers Road, Cambridge

Tickets are \$10 (\$8 for seniors and students) available at the door.

See www.cambridgeorchestra.ca for more details.



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