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Orchestra premieres new piece

SUSAN DEEFHOLTS
FOR THE RECORD

CAMBRIDGE

Kudos to the dedicated volunteer musicians, friends and families involved with the Cambridge Community Orchestra.

On Saturday night, at Forward Baptist Church, the ensemble took on an ambitious program, grouped together under the theme Suite Music.

In this, the latest of their season's worth of free concerts, music director and conductor Sabatino Vacca selected a catchy but challenging assortment of pieces for the evening. Most were from different musical suites, which, during the Baroque era, were often based on different kinds of dances.

The Orchestral Suite No. 3 by Johann Sebastian Bach conforms nicely to this paradigm, featuring elegant gavottes and a gigue that is simultaneously jaunty and dignified, as only Baroque music can be. It also features the famous Air on the G string.

The program also featured Mark Turner's Lyric Dialogue, an enjoyably accessible piece that presented a unifying rhythm, underlying a musical dialogue in which the melodic lines shifted from one instrument to another, as they progressed and developed through a series of different moods. A recent work by the Guelph-based composer and teacher, Lyric Dialogue premiered at the concert.

The unfortunate side of this was that it felt at times as if the musicians might have benefitted from hearing a recording of the work, as it seemed as if they were having difficulty grasping the overall picture of how Lyric Dialogue was meant to hang together, and so the piece was not always shown to its best advantage.

Though Lyric Dialogue presented an extra challenge, because it was new and so, unlike the Air on the G string or the Gigue I & II, it did not have the advantage of familiarity. Throughout the evening, there were tempo and tuning issues, particularly among the strings.

The woodwinds, brass and percussion, however, were generally strong and played well, particularly in the latter portion of the program.

For Morning Mood, the first piece in Edvard Grieg's Peer Gynt Suite, which was originally written as incidental music for a play by Henrik Ibsen, the flutes did a lovely job with their solos, and the rest of the woodwinds stepped up to the plate beautifully, as did the brass. In the Hall of the Mountain King was also a success, building gradually to a fevered culmination.



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The final featured work of the evening was Georges Bizet's Carmen Suite. Drawn from his opera of the same name, the suite features many of the opera's most memorable musical themes in an exclusively orchestral setting.

Here, the percussion section strutted their stuff, bringing out the sinuous, Spanish-flavoured rhythms that are so much a part of the seductive mood of the opera. In these orchestrations, the woodwinds and brass were often called upon to take on the melodic line that is sung in the opera, and they acquitted themselves well, nicely evoking the excitement and dash that is Bizet's Carmen.

Afterwards, the audience enthusiastically applauded the hours of practice, hard work and passion that went into pulling together a concert-length performance.

Concert

Cambridge Community Orchestra's Suite Music

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