

Classical Sonoma

Reporting on classical music across the North Bay

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PAUL SMITH DOES DOUBLE DUTY IN COLLEGE OF MARIN CONCERT IN SAN ANSELMO CHURCH

by Elenor Barcsak

Monday, November 21, 2011



In the last of three identical programs honoring the bi-centennial birth of Liszt, the College of Marin Orchestra performed a varied program Nov. 22 in San Anselmo's 1st Presbyterian Church before an audience of 200. Wagner's Siegfried Idyll, in the version for chamber orchestra, began the concert...

Recital

PASSIONATE SCHUMANN AND POETIC TCHAIKOVSKY IN ELENA KUSCHNEROVA PIANO RECITAL

by Terry McNeill

Sunday, November 20, 2011



Danish virtuoso Egon Petri once commented that most pianists "spend their melodic purse in small coin." Elena's Kushnerova, in her second Concerts Grand appearance Nov. 20, would have none of that approach, playing a mercurial recital that left

nothing on the table in the wake of her potent musical...

Symphony

APSC WOOS WELLS CENTER AUDIENCE WITH AN AUTUMN ROMANCE

by Peter Jaret

Sunday, November 20, 2011



One measure of the maturity of an orchestra is the ability to shape its sound to the personal musical vision of a guest conductor. So far this season, the American Philharmonic Sonoma County is proving that it has come of age, playing with great sensitivity

and musicality under the direction of gue...

Symphony

WHERE WERE YOU AT 22?

by Steve Osborn

Saturday, November 19, 2011



Where were you at 22? Just graduating from college and trying to find a job? Contemplating a trip around the world to discover yourself? Writing musical masterpieces that would endure for more than 300 years and counting? If you're Johann Sebastian Bach or Georg Friedrich Händel, the answers are no...

Symphony

ALIVE AND FREE, BUT HARD TO UNDERSTAND

by Steve Osborn

Saturday, November 12, 2011



"Is this my time to be alive and free?" That was the first intelligible question posed by soprano Marie Plette in her impassioned but often incomprehensible rendition of "The Promise of Time," a new song cycle by contemporary composer

SYMPHONY REVIEW

Marin Symphony / Tuesday, November 08, 2011

Alasdair Neal, conductor. Monica Ohuchi, piano



Composer Kenji Bunch and Pianist Monica Ohuchi

FAMILY PIANO CONCERTO AND MAHLER'S FIRST SYMPHONY AT MARIN CONCERT NOV. 8

by John Metz

Tuesday, November 08, 2011

The Marin Symphony's Nov. 8 concert in the Marin Center featured the West Coast premiere of Kenji Bunch's new Piano Concerto. Mr. Bunch, a Portland native and Juilliard School graduate, describes the work as a true "family project," as he wrote it for his wife Monica Ohuchi, the evening's soloist.

Mr. Bunch is a composer for whom dogma holds no currency, as he writes with an eclecticism that unapologetically blends the styles of pop and classical music, revealing influences of rock, electronica, film music, and more. He's even given to borrowing musical themes from 1970's TV shows.

And indeed this new addition to the composer's oeuvre is no exception. It begins with a rhythmic fabric woven by the winds, harp, percussion, and sustained strings, outlining lush harmonies suggestive of ambient electronica. The piano enters on an offbeat "blue note," allowing Ms. Ohuchi to immediately draw us in, as she articulates a somber melody, rich in its jazz influence. Intensity builds in the development, which eventually leads to a recapitulation of the opening fabric, now with piano participating. This soon evolves into an inevitable grand climax, which, by the composer's own admission, is "pure Hollywood," though justified by the quirkiness of the music embedding it.

The slow movement features more colorful writing for the piano and winds. And the finale is a Brazilian dance, rife with bongos, maracas, and woodblocks. It is obvious this piece was written for Ohuchi, as it plays to all her strengths, particularly her rich and colorful tone quality. This is the second work of Bunch's that conductor Alasdair Neale and Marin Symphony have championed, and it most certainly will not be the last.

After an adventurous opening half, the orchestra returned to familiar territory with a single work, Mahler's Symphony No. 1 in D major. The opening scene unfolded slowly, with the strings holding a sustained A, while in the distance, offstage trumpet fanfares call forth. Birdcalls are repeated in the clarinet, which brings us to the main theme, played by the cellos. The movement built in intensity, moving from hunting horn calls, to eerie harp lines, and an eventual frenzied climax into which Mr. Neale and his orchestra poured forth all their energy.

The second movement begins with a Ländler, an Austrian peasant waltz, introduced by the horns. This pedestrian waltz is balanced by a noble and gentler waltz, appearing in the middle of the movement. Such juxtaposition of the noble and the grotesque, the sublime and the banal, is exactly what Mahler's symphonies are all about. The slow movement, a funeral march based on a minor-key version of *Frère Jacques*, demands control and great sensitivity in performance, not to mention orchestral balance, but the latter was at times missing in this evening's performance. The fourth movement is a storm featuring sweeping themes in the brass, which performed with skill but ultimately lacked potency.

At first glance, the evening's two works are quite dissimilar. An epic Late Romantic *tour de force* of a symphony pitted against a quirky, offbeat, and even "poppy" piano concerto. But just as Mahler blended the common and the noble, so too does Mr. Bunch blend the popular and the classical. And both with great results.

David Carlson. The work, part of the Magnum Opus project for new ...

Recital

DEL MONTE'S GUITAR COMPOSITIONS MORE JAZZ THAN FLAMENCO AT SSU RECITAL

by Robin Brown

Friday, November 11, 2011



Substituting for classical guitarist William Kanengiser, guitarist Adam Del Monte played his own compositions and promised a Tárrega solo November 11 at a Sonoma State University recital in Green Music Center 1028. Mr. del Monte's playing was characterized by zippy scales and an adjusted instrum...

Symphony

FAMILY PIANO CONCERTO AND MAHLER'S FIRST SYMPHONY AT MARIN CONCERT NOV. 8

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Chamber

BRIDGE AND TURINA WORKS SPARKLE IN TRIO NAVARRO CONCERT AT SSU

by Terry McNeill

Sunday, November 06, 2011



An old musical friend was juxtaposed with two not-quite-so-old interlopers Nov. 6 when the venerable Trio Navarro opened their 2011-2012 season at Sonoma State University's Green Music Center 1028.

Mendelssohn's iconic D Minor Trio was the old shoe and Trios by Bridge and Turina were the unfamiliar...

Symphony

ALONDRA DE LA PARRA: A SWAN FOR A SONG

by Steve Osborn

Sunday, November 06, 2011



At 31, Alondra de la Parra is a conductor of immense promise, destined to lead a major orchestra — but first she has to work her way up through the minor leagues. Fortunately for Napa County, she made a brief stop Sunday with the Napa

Valley Symphony, and the results were gratifying. The concert to...

Recital

WIENS' SPANISH PROGRAM CHARMS CONCERTS GRAND AUDIENCE AT MENDOCINO COLLEGE

by Mendo Cinco

Sunday, October 30, 2011



Pianist Frank Wiens is a popular visitor to Northern California concert halls as recitalist and lecturer, but has strangely been absent from Mendocino County for decades. Under the auspices of the Concerts Grand

series, this oversight was corrected Oct. 30 in a memorable recital at Mendocino Colleg...

