

Pro Musica provides a great display of talent

BY MARY SOLOMON
Post and Courier Reviewer

The Charleston Pro Musica, together with the College of Charleston Madrigal Singers, put together an outstanding program on the Early Music Series Saturday afternoon at the First Presbyterian Church.

The singers, sounding like a cathedral choir, opened the program with "Alle Psallite," a 13th century motet that was beautifully sung. Following this, the wizard of percussion, Danny Mallon, improvised a solo on the tambourine, and was then joined by Steve Rosenberg on recorder. Rosenberg is the multi-talented coordinator of the series and showed his prowess on several instruments Saturday.

An Elizabethan English madrigal, "Now is the Month of Maying"

showed off the singers to perfection. This was followed by a ditty called "Fine Knacks for Ladies." From the late Renaissance and early Baroque came "Divisions Upon a Ground," which was a theme and variations piece of great beauty played expertly by the violin, cello and guitar.

From 17th century folklore came "The Wraggle Taggle Gypsies." It was an interesting minor key song with the musicians jamming between verses sung by the Madrigal Singers. "Faronell's Ground" featured a long, deftly played recorder solo by David Heywood. A Scottish song, "What Mightie Motion," featured a melancholic tune well-sung by the group.

A wonderful display of talent was featured in "Paul's Steeple." The spotlight was on cellist Wade Davis for this one, as guitar, harpsichord and percussion accompa-

nied him. It was one of the many highlights of this program.

The singers performed "Ach Elslein" as an a cappella number in German. They sing with those great flutey sounds so necessary for this music style.

Two dances and "Pastime with Good Company," the latter written by King Henry VIII, brought the program to a close. They produced long applause from their excited audience.

Rosenberg directs Pro Musica. It was founded in 1986 and has played more than 300 hundred

performances since then. The Madrigal Singers are based at the College of Charleston. Included in the group are Julia Harlow, harpsichord; Davis, cello; Geronimo Oyenard, violin; Heywood, recorders, whistles; and Sally Frysingers, recorders. The addition of percussionist Mallon brought both auditory and visible interest to this exciting program.

The ensemble performs again on Monday afternoon. They received well-deserved, prolonged applause for their efforts Saturday.

Newcomer shines in Early Music Series

By MARY SOLOMON
Post and Courier Reviewer

Soprano Meredith Varn teamed up with three other musicians to present an exciting concert on Piccolo's Early Music Series Monday night.

All of the musicians had some tie to the College of Charleston (home base for the series). Varn is a recent graduate. Carol Beyer, cellist, and Robin Zemp, harpsichordist, are faculty members and violinist Geronimo Oyenard is a student.

The program centered around Varn's beautiful, rich, resonant soprano voice and featured music from the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

Her concert was divided into three sections. The entire first part consisted of four songs by Henry Purcell, which Varn sang with sparkling clarity and fine diction.

The concluding number from this section,

"Hark! How all things," was full of those typically long phrases that Purcell was so fond of writing. Varn received resounding applause at the conclusion of this set, which also included "Strike the Viol," "I attempt from Love's sickness" and "If music be the food of love."

Accompaniment for the first two sections included harpsichord and cello. Section 2 included a mixture of music and composers from the 16th through 18th centuries. By the second set, the audience no longer restrained themselves from applauding each separate song. They were with Varn all the way.

By the 18th century, the dimensions and characteristics of music had developed and matured and had become more expressive. The pieces became longer and more intricate, the accompaniment more interesting, and vocal passages more challenging. The earlier music in this set was well done, but Varn really came

into her own with the more elaborate setting of the 18th-century styles.

G.F. Handel's music in the third set brought the stage violinist Oyenard. It's hard to believe he's just a sophomore in college. He plays with great sensitivity and restraint, and the interplay of violin and voice was outstanding.

Handel's music was decidedly more dramatic than the earlier pieces. The instrumentalists provided fine support for Varn at all times. The violin added a new dimension of texture and color to the first two songs, "Il Mio Crudel Martoro" and "Ne Men Con L'Ombre."

The tour de force for this outstanding display of talent was the final "Qual Farfalletta." Varn is an up-and-coming voice to be reckoned with and she should go far in her chosen field of vocal performance.

Heavy applause, several bows and a standing ovation from an enthusiastic audience failed to bring an encore, but those in attendance would have liked to hear more from this newcomer.

REVIEW

C of C orchestra offers program worth hearing

JONES from Page 1E

people actually attended those "Bohemes," and how many actually enjoyed the experience. Did they thrill to the tunes and the romance? Did they weep helplessly all through Mimi's dying moments? Did they doze impatiently and keep peeking at their watches? Will they go to another opera the first chance they get, or will they stay home and watch sitcoms?

It's easy to see why "La Boheme" is so popular. The story is about real people at the brink of adulthood. It is impossible to remain untouched by these high-spirited youngsters and their struggles to find love and create art. I must have heard Puccini's masterpiece several thousand times, in productions from huge to nonexistent, with great singers and with people who could barely sing at all. It has never failed to reduce me to tears. I like to think it never will.

At the Charleston Concert Association's "La Boheme" at Gaillard, it was hard to tell what the public thought. The house looked sold-out, and the audience was silent, attentive and generous with applause, especially directed at tenor Simon O'Neill, a pleasantly stocky young man with a penetrating sound and a laserlike high C (I know it was a C because I had my pitch pipe handy). When O'Neill was singing, sparks flickered. Otherwise, it was a fairly dim show.

Blame it on the lighting, glum and inept, and the production, stingy to the point of starvation. The chorus was amusingly small, and the charming scene involving a toy merchant and a flock of children had been snipped out. The sets were minimal, and the lighting, for which the program blamed Deanna Fitzgerald, kept most of the cast in shadow. Mimi, a black woman dressed in dark clothes, sang her entire death scene in the dark, and as soon as she was dead they shone a spotlight on her face. Perverse.

Musically, at least, this "Boheme" was reasonably good. The standout was tenor O'Neill. (He has a Web site and sound clips, so you can hear his high C for yourself. Just do a Google on "o'neill tenor" and there you'll be.) His Mimi was Karen Slack, heavy-set and lacking in charm, but equipped with a rich, vibrant voice of considerable volume.

Joshua Bloom made an attractive Marcello, and Jennifer Black

floor in a fake faint to attract attention, but I hated it when she lifted her leg and provided every-one onstage a look straight up her dress. Puccini thought a tantalizing glimpse of her ankle would be sufficient, and Puccini was right. This was another of those "Bohemes" that turned the fun-loving Musetta into a street whore, and I couldn't have liked it less.

Sean Anderson was an efficient Schaunard, Ricardo Herrera a good-sounding Colline forced to sing his aria so far upstage he could hardly be seen or heard at all. Ari Pelto conducted the slimmed-down, revised orchestration, favoring slow tempi and a nonenergetic style.

Not an inspiring evening, but not a boring one either. As to "Boheme" being produced so often, operas don't get produced by public opinion. They get produced because someone in authority likes them and decrees they be done. Usually it's a leading conductor or an influential director. Next, the board of directors decides if the company can pay for the show. The process works for theater of any kind.

The Charleston Concert Association also brought in the town's favorite fiddler, Joshua Bell, to conduct and guest-star for the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields. This is a hugely successful (more than 500 recordings) chamber group containing 20 stringed instruments plus a harpsichord. As for Mr. Bell, he is regarded around here as a local boy made good, since he first appeared at age 17 with the Chamber Music series at Spoleto USA and was a regular feature for many years. He's 34 now, but he still could pass for 17, at least from the 11th row in Gaillard.

More important, Bell is one of the world's best violinists. He has a keen ear for pitch, a strong musical sensitivity, an inborn ability to communicate with an audience. Recently he has begun applying that last ability to conducting, and it was fascinating to watch how he managed to conduct without using

his hands (one of which is occupied by a violin, the other by a bow). He conducts by subtle twists and turns and nods, by instinctive body language plus a set of highly expressive eyes.

Bell and the orchestra played two violin concertos, one by Bach, another by Haydn, with style and pure tone. After intermission, there was a novelty: Schubert's "Death and the Maiden" quartet as arranged for string orchestra by Gustav Mahler. It is always interesting to hear one great composer's interpretation of another, and this is more interesting than most. Bell and company played it for all the drama Mahler put into the work. True, he tended to fuss over phrases, and his favorite device of suddenly dropping to a pianissimo and then swelling into a fortissimo grew a bit tiresome, at least to these ears. But there's no question that he and the orchestra were making major music on a major level. Barring some catastrophe, Bell's future seems certain to be a great one.

At Footlights Theatre, the current show is "Stepping Out," a British comedy about nine up-in-years ladies and one pathological shy gentleman who, for reasons I never figured out, are taking a class in tap dancing. There is a great deal of talking, and a great deal of trying to dance. At the end of the show, they actually do dance, but I confess I had grown impatient with 140 minutes of lusterless chatter and inept hoofing, and when 10:20 p.m. rolled around and no end was in view, I fled into the night.

"Stepping Out" was authored by someone named Richard Harris, probably not the famous actor who died last month, but nobody I asked could be certain about that. The usually estimable Sheri Grace Wenger directed, not very effectively. But I can't imagine how any genius could have breathed life into this corpse of a comedy. I thought "Stepping Out" plotless, pointless and witless. I'm still wondering how such drivel found its way onto the Footlight Players' stage.

On Monday night I went to see the much-praised college production of "Boy Gets Girl," a powerful drama about a stalker. But I had waited too late to buy a ticket, and the theater was sold out. Disappointed, I wandered over to the Sottile Theatre where a concert by the College of Charleston Chamber Orchestra had just started. Budit Ungrangsee was on the podium, his presence

From Gluck's "Orpheus." At the program went on, there was music by Ravel (the "Pavane"), Mozart (the third violin concerto), and Schubert (snippets from "Rosamunde").

It's always fascinating to hear what talented youngsters are doing, and this was a program worth hearing. There were a few familiar faces in the orchestra, CSO professionals filling in the weak spots, but I'd still call it a student effort. There were the expected struggles on the harder-to-play instruments, and enough out-of-tune moments to remind one that these were college musicians, not professional ones. Still, the playing was good enough to give pleasure in the music, and I felt privileged to be there. A violinist named Geronimo Oyenard played the Mozart concerto (K. 216) with style and musicianship. The auditorium, by the way, was nearly filled by people who clearly were well beyond their college days. And they all seemed to be having a lovely time.

Last Sunday was cold, wet and windy, a gumbo-and-crosswords sort of day. Nevertheless, I went to the concert at the Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul. The Charleston Symphony Orchestra was there, and so were the Charleston Symphony Chamber Singers, and so was conductor Budit Ungrangsee. The cathedral was warm and glowing, the choir atmospherically lit (the "Boheme" lighting designer might have learned some lessons there), and the music shrewdly chosen and beautifully played. There was one of those Gabrieli pieces ("In ecclesiis benedicite Domino") full of echo effects from organ, choir, brass and soloists, and it sounded quite grand in the resonant church acoustics.

John Corigliano's "Fern Hill" followed. The poem is one of Dylan Thomas' most affecting, and Corigliano was in his early 20s when he wrote it in the late 1950s. Musically, it is rich, rather elaborate and filled with emotion. In its nostalgia and tonal beauty, it recalls Barber's "Knoxville Summer 1915," not a bad model for a young composer just starting out. The performance was all one could have wished for.

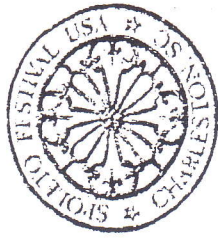
Bach's "Christ lag in Todesbanden" took up the rest of the program. All went well, though church acoustics blurred the more intricate sections of the music. Still, churches in Bach's day had this kind of acoustics, too, so serious complaints are probably out of order.

It was a delightful late afternoon experience, when it was over the weather was still bracingly raw.



Charleston Symphony Orchestra conductor Budit Ungrangsee.

201471111 owner, 102521064-201



Spoleto Today

12A.Sunday, June 1, 2003

REVIEW

Pro Musica ensemble spirited

BY CAROL FURTWANGLER
Post and Courier Reviewer

How full an hour can be when programmed by Steve Rosenberg. Saturday afternoon, as part of Piccolo Spoleto's Early Music Series, the nine extraordinary musicians of Charleston Pro Musica presented a smorgasbord of flavors both familiar and exotic with "Come Lasses and Lads."

This ensemble has grown beyond expectations, even those of founder and director Rosenberg. They went professional about five years ago and now have international gigs plus PBS exposure.

The audience that filled well over half of St. Philip's Episcopal Church welcomed the ensemble with rousing applause. Talk about your reputation preceding you.

The music, spanning continents and time, ranges from the Middle Ages through the French Renaissance to drinking-song lyrics devised in the 20th century and set to a well-known dance of the 16th century. These pieces seem to resonate inside the human spirit, reaching out to touch something in our collective souls.

Jose Lemos, who began charming us with his musician- and showmanship the minute he hit the College of Charleston several years ago, makes his voice, an already amazing countertenor, do amazing things.

Together with soprano Emily McClure, he projects humility and a certain mischievousness whether floating a "pure" tone, negotiating rapid-fire French, or climbing the countertenor's special tessitura to incredible heights.

I would go anywhere, anytime to hear again his insouciant rendition of "The Foggy Dew."

McClure, possessed of a clear, lovely and natural soprano, delighted the crowd with her own brand of charisma. She seemed purely to enjoy performing her solo numbers, especially the traditional English "Down With The Rosemary and Bay," as well as her several duets with Lemos.

Claudin's "Allez Souspirs" and "Porque Llorax" from the Spanish Sephardic tradition provided rare and singularly rich opportunities to analyze the difference in tone, texture and range of the two voices. Harmonic overtones abounded in this acoustical setting traditional for this type of music.

Mary Anne Ballard, viols, played almost continuously, using the rebec (a dear little instrument resembling a baby guitar) to especially endearing effect in accompanying Lemos on "La Serena," a traditional Spanish song during which you fully expect a matador to put in an appearance.

Edwin Blanton, on recorders and gemshorn, plays with expertise and commitment heavily salted with a sense of humor, as do all the musicians. Lewis Finch (recorders, gemshorn, corumuse), David Heyward (recorders), Rosenberg (guitars, recorders, pipe) and Geronimo Oyenard (violin) propagate the general merriment by occasionally joining in the singing. Percussionist Danny Mallon lends authenticity on everything from castanets to tambourine to a North African drum played with fingers only.

The series continues daily, with Charleston Pro Musica performing today and June 8.

A jolly good time guaranteed.

Donate to the *City Paper* | Flip page by page

CHARLESTON CITY PAPER

ARTS+MOVIES » FEATURES

November 03, 2010

Charleston Symphony's finest remember David Stahl

Maestro Memories

By Lindsay Koob



With David Stahl's passing, the CSO needs Charleston's support now more than ever.

The news of David Stahl's untimely passing the Sunday before last hit me very hard, as it did so many others; I haven't grieved so deeply for anybody since my dad died. I wrote about him often, and we still remained friends even though I had pointed out some of the Charleston Symphony's performance flaws in print. We often spoke German together whenever we met.

But far beyond that, I owe David a huge debt of personal gratitude. Both directly and indirectly, he greatly enhanced the quality of my life — and not just through my regular attendance at CSO concerts. In fact, he helped direct the course of my life after I returned home to Charleston two decades ago at a time of a grim professional crisis in my life.

The healing process began when I joined the CSO Chorus in 1995. My contacts there led directly to a wonderful job at the now-closed Millennium Music. While I'd always been a choral singer, David and his orchestra gave me my first crack at performing the big choral-orchestral repertoire, reinforced by the chances I got to sing with the CSOC for Dr. Joseph Flummerfelt during Spoleto. Over eight seasons, David was my teacher and unofficial mentor, helping me to get to know many of the greatest masterpieces from the inside out and showing me, by example, what it takes to make world-class music. My stint with the CSO Chorus also led directly to my opportunity to sing professionally at St. Michael's Church, a position I still hold.

As you can well imagine, working with David helped me to gain the knowledge, insight, and confidence I needed to become a music writer, and his warm personal support and advocacy of my efforts were instrumental in getting me established locally as a legitimate critic. That, in turn, was my springboard to getting published nationally and gaining an international readership and reputation. David helped me in many ways to find my ultimate niche in life. But by the time I got around to writing to tell him that, it was too late.

But this tribute is hardly restricted to just my own personal David Stahl story. I've heard from dozens of local musicians and fans and friends whose lives David touched in deep and wonderful ways. We all know that David's memory will live on in our hearts. Read on, and learn some of the reasons why just about everybody he knew will never forget him.

Music is nothing but a series of black symbols on paper without the talented and hard-working musicians who turn them into living, breathing music. And David never forgot that. While he was often quite firm about what he expected from his players, he was never the archetypal martinet conductor. He never put himself "above" them in any way.

As longtime CSO flutist Regina Helcher Yost recalls, "When my father passed away, David came up to me in the very next rehearsal and hugged me, speaking of my loss with genuine kindness and concern. That was David. He really cared about the CSO musicians' lives and wanted to be a part of them. If someone got engaged or married or had children, he always congratulated them warmly. He was more than just a conductor and a great musician. He was a friend."

Another aspect of David's work with his musicians was the way he actively mentored them, monitoring their development as orchestral players and encouraging the best of them to "spread their wings" (as David often put it) and move on to bigger and better-paying orchestras. Many of the nation's finest young conservatory grads — aware of David's reputation — flocked to audition for the Charleston Symphony Orchestra. While nobody expected to get rich playing for the CSO, they knew that the Holy City was one of the best places to learn the basic orchestral repertoire and hone their skills under the baton of a world-class conductor. And sure enough, right from the start, CSO veterans, once they felt they were "finished" musicians, began to take what they had learned under David and win top spots with respected major metro ensembles.

Perhaps Stahl's biggest success story in that regard was violinist and former CSO Concertmaster Alexander Kerr, whose artistic journey took him to the exalted position of Concertmaster with Amsterdam's Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, regarded by many as Europe's finest ensemble. Kerr, now a world-famous soloist, chamber player, and Indiana University professor, recalled his audition for the post of CSO concertmaster. After three seemingly endless rounds of playing previously assigned music, he finally met David face-to-face for the final part of the audition. David asked him if he knew Mozart's violin concertos and Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, then picked movements from them at random and asked Kerr to play as much as he could of them from memory. Then he handed him the score to Strauss's *Don Juan* and said sternly, "Here's your sight-reading test. You have 15 minutes to practice."

"Boy, was I mad," Kerr remembers. "Did this guy realize that pulling these pieces back from the recesses of my memory wasn't just whistling Dixie? But I duly practiced for 15 minutes and played the audition of my life. 'Take that!' I thought as I played."

He adds, "After more than 12 grueling hours of frantic fiddling — in 95-degree temperatures while wearing a black wool suit — I was finally offered the job. He never doubted me again and never stopped supporting me tirelessly from that day forward. Thank you, David. Thank you for my life."

Pianist Enrique Graf feels very lucky to have known David. Over the years, he played more than 10 piano concertos with the CSO and recorded three of them. "He was the ideal partner to play concertos with," says Graf, a College of Charleston artist-in-residence. "It was always easy. He listened openly first, then we exchanged a few ideas or suggestions, and we were done. We didn't even have to look at each other. The music flowed, and we were together."

Graf adds, "With many conductors, there are disagreements, power struggles, and temper tantrums, but never with David. He was always humble, respectful, and confident: a rare and wonderful combination for a conductor."

CofC composition professor Edward Hart recalls a fond memory from 1998, when he and his wife happened to be booked on the same plane to Europe with Stahl. "Of course," Hart says, "any self-respecting composer would use this 'captive audience' scenario to try to push his own music on a great conductor. But much to my surprise, it was David who came to sit with us and suggest that the CSO perform one of my works. Thus began a long and fruitful relationship with my hometown orchestra, which has led to opportunities both here and abroad, including a commission for my only piano concerto, which the CSO performed in 2003 and recorded in 2005."

Hart adds, "He gave me, an unknown young Charleston composer, the opportunity to have my works played by world-class musicians. I will always be grateful for his generosity."

Our maestro had a pronounced penchant for the unusual and offbeat as well. Ellen Dressler Moryl, director of Charleston's Office of Cultural Affairs, cites one of David's all-time favorite projects: the time he conducted Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* as part of the Piccolo Spoleto Festival. A collaboration between Piccolo, the CSO, and Charleston Ballet Theatre, it was staged under the 1,400-year-old Angel Oak. "I recall the experience fondly," Moryl says. "Performing Stravinsky, with dancers, under an ancient oak tree came naturally to him."

Concertgoers got mostly a rear-view look at David in action on the podium. That was enough for all of us to experience his exuberant conducting style: his athletic stance, sweeping gestures, slashing baton, and the spontaneous "body dance" that he no doubt picked up from his mentor Leonard Bernstein. For most conductors, body language is a major tool for communicating mood and musical intent to their players. But an orchestra or chorus gets to see not only the conductor's baton and body language — but his face — and several musicians commented on what David's face did for them, in rehearsal or in concert.

CofC grad Geronimo Oyenard, now a successful orchestral violinist, was often tapped to perform as a "sub" with the CSO. Oyenard credits Stahl for doing much to prepare him for his developing career and speaks warmly of David's personal kindness to him. But, for a young student joining an orchestra of pros for the first time, David could inspire terror as well. "To this day," he says, "I remember his occasional 'look of death' if I forgot to put on my mute or started to drag." Oyenard recalls once, after he made an audible mistake

in a performance, "sitting petrified as [David] exited the stage afterwards — fuming, huffing, and puffing." But the invitations to sub kept coming, and a young musician gained his most valuable early experience in the process.

Other musicians saw different things in Stahl's uncannily expressive face. Joe Gamboa, a chorus member, says, "As David conducted, he looked straight into our eyes, fixing us with a look that transmitted the very soul of the music, and that always drew passionate singing from us. He would often sing along as he conducted, and you could always follow his phrasing just by watching his mouth. Singing for David was always exhilarating and moving."

Cellist Stuart Terry vividly remembers a CSO performance of Gustav Mahler's mighty Symphony No. 2, the so-called "Resurrection" symphony. "David told us in rehearsal that this performance was a personal tribute to his mother, on the anniversary of her death. She had loved the piece, and David had made sure she heard it one last time before she died," Terry says. "Near the end of the piece, David was clearly wet in the eyes."

Retired CofC composition professor David W. Maves was the CSO's timpanist when Stahl came to Charleston for his first audition with his future orchestra. "I was amazed that he didn't break and run screaming from that first rehearsal," Maves says. "On the downbeat of the first work, (Wagner's) *Tristan* prelude, all three cellos played a major, rather than a minor sixth. Oh, the look on his face ... then, 'F-natural, not F-sharp,' he corrected, and began again ... and the rest is history."

Then there was Stahl's fabled sense of humor. No rehearsal passed without him cracking some joke or making a wry observation. Megan Holland, the CSO's former principal second violin, relates one of her fondest memories. "We were in rehearsal, and I made a mistake. David — ever the sports fan — immediately whipped out a yellow flag and threw it at me, yelling 'Foul!' It made my day."

Former CSO music librarian Charmaine LeClair remembers a prank that the players pulled on him. "For our Halloween concert one year, while David was in Germany, one of the players sported a costume that included a wig that looked just like David's very conspicuous mop of hair. A week later, we put a photo of the 'David-double' on the podium before his next rehearsal with us, even though we were a little nervous that David would take offense," LeClair says. "But upon finding the photo, David got a total kick out of it, smiling and laughing. He chuckled about it for days."

In rehearsals, Stahl almost always gave us little musicological or historical "mini-lectures" that invariably made whatever work we were doing seem more relevant to his musicians. Chorus member Chuck Bevers recalls, "In our rehearsal for the 2009 performance of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, David described Stoll's Alley [a pedestrian walkway connecting Church and East Bay] as the likely original location of Catfish Row, the opera's original scenario. He asked us to imagine ourselves there in the 1920s, peering at the harbor during the hurricane. So the next day, I found and walked Stoll's Alley, and it helped to give me a kind of personal connection to the music that nothing else could've."

Perhaps the deepest theme of Stahl's life — one that many folks commented on — was his total devotion to his family and to Charleston, where his kids were born and raised. His Munich opera house people bugged him constantly about moving to Germany, but David would have none of it. Charleston was his home. Period.

One of the most telling (and moving) family-related reminiscences are those of Robert Taylor, CofC choral program director. Not only had Taylor, as director of the CSO Chorus, been a close musical collaborator, preparing choruses for David for more than a decade, but he had been one of David's most intimate friends. When Taylor first arrived in Charleston, he had recently lost his father, and David immediately helped fill the void as a kind of surrogate "big brother." David even called Taylor his "brother in law" in public, since they, at David's urging, had bought Labrador puppies from the same breeder.

"The biggest impact David had on me came from watching him balance his professional life with being a good husband to Karen and a good father to Byron and Anna," Taylor says. "I cannot tell you how many times David took the red-eye flight from Munich so that he could march off the plane straight to an event of either Anna's or Byron's. Once home, David wanted to simply be dad. David was certainly accustomed to being a star and was always gracious in that role. But above all, he wanted his kids to have a normal environment and made a concerted effort to see to it that that happened. As I said to him when I visited him for what turned out to be the final time in his hospital room, as much as I learned about conducting from David, the lessons I cherished most were how to put your family first. Always."

David's beloved wife, Karen, passed away four weeks before him. Their three children — Sonia, 29 (from a previous marriage), Byron, 20, and Anna, 16 — are now grieving the devastating loss of both parents. It is to them that we send our very deepest condolences.

But Stahl had yet another beloved child: the orchestra that he nurtured and transformed into a top-quality institution that put Charleston on the symphonic map. The CSO remains David's primary legacy to the city he loved. And the most ironic element of the overall tragedy is the sad fact that the orchestra he gave us is ailing. Their season was canceled last spring, and the symphony has yet to be revived. The CSO has never had a viable financial plan and has bounced from crisis to crisis over the past decade, but the situation has never been so dire. At the same time, Charleston has failed to rally the collective will and determination to save one of its finest performing arts institutions. Shame on us for letting it happen, even in the face of the ongoing recession. It goes without saying that the best way we can honor this great man's memory will be to act decisively as a community to preserve the wondrous orchestra that he gave us. I'm convinced that the collective will is there. Signs of it are everywhere. We must somehow harness it.

The CSO's recent 75th anniversary concert galvanized more than 2,000 rabid orchestral fans. The stalwart CSO League has undertaken a number of initiatives and proposed others. A series of public forums on the issue were held last spring. There's even a group of talented young music students who, under the leadership of 15-year-old Abby Kent, are performing a series of concerts in Mt. Pleasant to foster awareness of the CSO's plight.

There are indications that part of the CSO's season may yet be salvaged in the coming weeks, and, if that happens, their executive board needs to hire a seasoned financial manager, somebody with a proven fundraising track record. While they're at it, why not engage a savvy cybergeek who can find ways to reach art lovers everywhere. Remember, President Obama swept into office on such a mass campaign, bankrolled by five and 10-dollar contributions from millions, and they did it via the internet. What about organizing a radio- or TV-a-thon? That's how NPR raises hundreds of thousands of dollars every year in this state alone. Why not get our kids involved, with neighborhood leaflet/collection campaigns coordinated through local school boards? Folks have pooh-pooed such solutions as impractical, pie-in-the-sky thinking, but stranger ideas than those have worked before under different circumstances.

All of us who have spoken here — and many hundreds of others — will carry cherished memories of David to our own graves. But memories are no substitute for living, breathing orchestral music from a world-class orchestra, music that, if the CSO survives, will continue to be driven by David's example and filled with his spirit.

So we simply must save our symphony, S.O.S. for short.

As hackneyed as it may sound, it succinctly expresses both the goal and the urgency of the situation. Let it inspire us to apply some good old American ingenuity to the problem, and then take determined action. We owe that to David.

Tags: CSO, David Stahl

Support local journalism with a donation to Charleston City Paper

FUN IN 'GAME': NCSA musical has much going for it

By Ken Keuffel
JOURNAL REPORTER

In *The Game of Love*, a fine musical that drama students at the N.C. School of the Arts' are presenting in De Mille Theatre on campus, Anatol (Wesley Taylor) is in love with love. A more profound intimacy with one of the many female lovers in his party-filled life eludes him.

What remains is a "game" deriving from the "Anatol" plays of Austrian Arthur Schnitzler. The game, though set in the Vienna of the early 20th century, still rings true, its relevancy enhanced by the strong book and lyrics of Tom Jones (*The Fantasticks*) and by timeless melodies of Jacques Offenbach. Director Gerald Freedman's fluid staging keeps the audience engaged as well.

Perhaps the most effective dramatics come in Act II when Anatol, in search of what Max calls a little "moderation," is about to be married and needs to be at the ceremony in a couple of hours. The trouble is that Illona (Jessica Webb) has tempted Anatol on the night before the wedding, and she is still in Anatol's apartment the next morning, fully expecting to stay with him. Anatol's sidekick, Max (E.J. Cantu), has popped in, as well.

Naturally, Illona knows nothing of Anatol's impending marriage and, when she finds out? Let's just say that her rage is more than a little terrifying. You don't mess with Illona and you don't leave a letter opener around her when she's mad.

Another, funny scene pits Annie (Lauren Culpepper) and Anatol at dinner on their

last night together. They break up — but not before the audience breaks up with laughter as well, thanks to the way that a famished Annie "slurps" all those oysters.

In purely musical terms, *Game* has much to recommend it. All five of the women whom Anatol becomes involved with are unusually strong singers, and at least one, Cora (Katharine Elkington), summons a surprising operatic-like excitement and classical technique.

The production comes courtesy of a piano trio. This consists of a piano (Damon Carmona); a violin (Geronimo Oyenard); and a cello (Ian Antal). It's an unusual arrangement. It suits the period that *Game* is trying to evoke, and it's perfect for the generally lighter voices in the production.

Fans of operetta will likely get a kick out of the new life that Offenbach's familiar tunes find here in their marriage with Jones' lyrics. Attractive additional music comes courtesy of Nancy Ford.

Both Kathleen McCallister's costumes, in which the women look lovely, and Amanda Walker's sets vividly bring old Vienna back to life.

■ Drama students at the N.C. School of the Arts will present **The Game of Love** through next Saturday in De Mille Theatre on campus. Night shows will be at 8 p.m. today, and Wednesday through next Saturday. Matinees will be at 2 p.m. Sunday and next Saturday. Tickets are \$12, \$10 for seniors and student. For more information, call 721-1945.

■ Ken Keuffel can be reached at 727-7337 or at kkeuffel@wsjournal.com.

https://thefranklinnews.com/news/smac-to-host-violin-and-piano-concert/article_1a670fda-4cf6-51f0-8817-5d9b446cb346.html

SMAC to host violin and piano concert

Proceeds will benefit the Franklin County School Violin Program

May 10, 2012

Only \$3 for 13 weeks



Geronimo Oyenard

The Smith Mountain Arts Council (SMAC) will host a concert on Sunday, May 20 to benefit the Franklin County School Violin Program.

Uruguayan violinist Geronimo Oyenard and Romanian pianist Melia Garber will present an afternoon of classical music at Trinity Ecumenical Parish at 4 p.m.

Oyenard served as a member of the Charleston Symphony Orchestra, North Carolina Symphony and the West Virginia Symphony before joining the violin section of the Roanoke Symphony in 2007.

Oyenard is currently a violin instructor for the Franklin County public schools, where he directs an in-school Suzuki-based program for more than 60 elementary and middle school students.

Garber is the choir director, pianist and organist at Virginia Heights Baptist Church in Roanoke and has taught piano at Hollins University since 2001.

At intermission, students who won the first SMAC songwriting contest will be recognized.

Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$5 for students. Violin students will be admitted free. No reservations are necessary. For additional information, contact Jim Mullens at **jhmullens@yahoo.com** or 540.721.4959.

 0 comments

Be the first to know

Get local news delivered to your inbox!

Email Address

Sign up!

* I understand and agree that registration on or use of this site constitutes agreement to its user agreement and [privacy_policy](#).

Most Popular

Harvester cancels remaining shows for 2020

Aug 18, 2020



Recently-named director of operations settles into role at Franklin County Public Schools

Aug 14, 2020



New event venue opens in Rocky Mount

19 hrs ago



Franklin County food banks are searching for volunteers

Aug 19, 2020



Franklin County agrees to no new gun laws

19 hrs ago



Smith Mountain Dock and Lodge is now The Dock at SML

Aug 19, 2020



Radio DJ moves from Rocky Mount to Smith Mountain Lake

Aug 12, 2020



Teacher puts talents to work at Dudley Elementary

Aug 19, 2020



Boones Mill woman publishes short story in 'Chicken Soup for the Soul' series

Aug 7, 2020



BY EMMA SCHKLOVEN
eschkloven@newsadvance.com
(434) 385-5489

Violinist Geronimo Oyenard is known among his students as Mr. O, a nickname he doesn't mind because, he says in his bio, it's a name worthy of a Bond villain.

"One of the kindergarteners called me Mr. Ore once," says Oyenard, who recently was named Lynchburg Symphony Orchestra's concertmaster for the 2015-16 season. "That stuck for a while."

Originally from Montevideo, Uruguay, Oyenard, who will perform with LSO Sunday during "Stories & Serenades: A Collaboration with the Opera on the James," has been playing professionally since his teens, long before he moved to Lynchburg in 2014.

"Uruguay is ... this teeny, tiny country sandwiched in between Argentina and Brazil, which are massive," he says. "There's no native population, so our heritage is basically Spanish and Italian. ... It's very different from South American countries."

While living in Montevideo, the violinist played and soloed with the national symphony of Uruguay and served as concertmaster for the country's national youth symphony.

"If you want to be a musician, there's only two big orchestras [in Uruguay] and they both share the same pool of musicians," he says. "I was already playing with them at the time after I won a competition, so I was 18 ... so it made sense for me to come here."

Mr. O

Violinist from Uruguay named Lynchburg Symphony Orchestra's concertmaster for 2015-16 season



IF YOU GO

» **What:** Lynchburg Symphony Orchestra presents "Stories & Serenades: A Collaboration with the Opera on the James"

» **When:** 3 p.m. Sunday

» **Where:** E.C. Glass High School, 2411 Memorial Ave.

» **Tickets:** \$18 in advance and \$20 at the door for adults; \$10 for full-time students ages 19 to 26; free for children 18 and younger

» **Info:** (434) 485-6604 or www.lynchburgtickets.com/lso or www.lynchburgsymphony.org

COURTESY OF GREG PHILPOTT/PHILPOTT PHOTOGRAPHY

Oyenard left home at 18 to study at the College of Charleston, after the head of the piano department, another native of Uruguay, recruited him.

"Every summer he'd come home and recruit students," says the violinist. "It was mostly piano players; I was the first non-piano player he got."

While an undergrad, Oyenard played with the Charleston Symphony, something he says was a great learning experience.

"It was the best of both worlds. During the day I was a college student and then at night I would go play with professionals."

Oyenard eventually went on to complete his Masters of Music at the University of North Carolina School for the Arts.

He has played with groups that include the Roanoke Symphony, the Chamber Orchestra of the Triangle in Durham, North Carolina, and the Williamsburg Symphonia and has performed in festivals abroad in such locations as France,

Spain and Brazil.

A certified Suzuki method violin teacher, Oyenard also served as the Roanoke Symphony Orchestra's strings instructor for three years and coached its youth symphony. While with RSO, he created and directed Suzuki method violin programs in Franklin County and Salem City public schools.

In Lynchburg, he performs with not only LSO, but Opera on the James and the James Chamber Players. He also teaches for the Lynchburg City Schools Suzuki Program and gives private lessons in Lynchburg and Roanoke.

English is not your first language.

"Third language, actually. Spanish is the native language and my family's not Italian, so I learned French as my second language. Unfortunately, I don't get to use it anymore anywhere, which is a pity because it's a beautiful language. No one speaks it. Then English was my third language."

How old were you when you started playing violin?

"I was probably like four or five. I don't remember really well. But, the story goes, when I was in kindergarten, during free playtime I'd always gravitate toward the musical instruments. So, the teacher had a little chat with my mom and told her, 'This kid might have musical inclinations, you might want to explore that.' My mom is a former soloist with the national ballet company in Uruguay, so she knew a lot of orchestra people because the ballet and the orchestra, the national company, they all share the same building and the orchestra plays for the ballet and so forth.

See **LSO**, Page B4

LSO

From Page B1

"At the time, one of the orchestra violists, she had just come back from Venezuela after staying several years there and learning a lot about early child music pedagogy, the Suzuki method and so forth. So, I started out with her from ages 4 to 18, basically until I left. She was my only teacher. Eventually, when she retired from the orchestra, she sold me her violin, which was really nice. It has sentimental value."

Do you still play with that one?

"It's a really nice, old German one; I don't play it as much. Basically what I did was a couple months ago, I took it to North Carolina to turn it into a baroque violin — which means there's no chin rest, the bridge is different, the strings are cut. You just get a different sound, you get a darker sound — because it was made around that time, so we figured it would be perfect for that."



Geronimo Oyenard is the new concertmaster for Lynchburg Symphony Orchestra, which begins its 2015-16 season this Sunday.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GREG PHILPOTT/PHILPOTT PHOTOGRAPHY

You've said Mozart is your favorite composer.

"On one hand, he's probably the hardest composer to play well. If you audition for any orchestra, they will always ask for Mozart. They'll ask for really difficult flashy stuff because it's just so transparent and beautiful. You don't have to add anything to it, it's all there. So, they really judge you on a basis of how well you can play Mozart. ... And just reading about him, it never gets old. He was such a character that you're always learning new stories or something about his life you didn't know. He only lived for 25 years, and it was a real intense life."

How is playing chamber music different from playing orchestral music?

"It's two sets of skills. In an orchestra, it's being part of a well-oiled machine in the sense that you have to blend in. You have to be flexible because you're responding to your section leader, who's also a nexus between the conductor and the rest of the section. It requires a lot of discipline; you can't really stick out, but in a good way. You realize you're playing, in my opinion, the best repertoire there is for our instrument, and you can be a section leader [or] you can sit in the back

and it's still rewarding.

"In chamber music, you also have amazing repertoire, but you can let your individuality show a little bit more, and in the best circumstances, it's like having a conversation with friends. ... And there's flexibility. I've done recitals with a piano when there was a cello or a string quartet."

How would you describe Suzuki?

"It is a pedagogy method that originated in the late '40s, early '50s in Japan. The creator, Dr. Suzuki, who [was] a Japanese violinist who lived in Germany, he came to the realization that much like you learn your native tongue when you're little just by imitation and repetition as opposed to a grammar book, or you learn to speak before you learn how to write, that the same could be used for music pedagogy.

"As far as what instruments you could use, the piano's too big. For wind instruments, your lungs are not developed. When you're young, bass is obviously too big. So, the violin seemed to be the perfect choice. ... It's a great way to get kids interested and excited about music before they transition to a traditional method."

What do you do as concertmaster?

"The concertmaster is the nexus between the conductor and the string section. It's your job to unify all the string sections, and in particular, the first violin section, which gets the lion's share of the melodic work. So for example, when Chris [Swanson, LSO's Music Director and Conductor] decides the repertoire, you have to meet with him and decide how do you want [things] to sound, how fast are you going to take it? And that's when you start deciding

on bowings and fingerings to make that musical idea come across in technical terms.

You lead your section, you tune the orchestra, you get the occasional solo. It's a great responsibility, but it's definitely something I love doing."

What is your favorite piece to play and why?

"One of the biggest clichés to say is it's the one that I'm currently working on because you start finding more and more things in it. But if I had to pick one piece of music that personally I wouldn't get bored with — and it's not by Mozart, it's actually

one of Beethoven's late string quartets. I think it's 'Opus 130.' Playing the entire Beethoven cycle is like one of the Mount Everests for string players. It's one of those desert island recordings you just take with you, listen to and never get bored with it.

"So, that particular one, it's super long and it has, to me, what's the most poignant slow moment that Beethoven ever wrote. Just the image of him in his last years, completely deaf and alone in his bed, he couldn't play it, but just listening to it in his head would make him cry. That's such a powerful image to me."