

Finale Distinguishes Symphony Concert

Written by Abbie Dombrock

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On Sunday, the Quad City Symphony Orchestra showed its ability to inspire its audience in collaboration with a guest artist and with its members' own talent. The orchestra performed three enjoyable pieces, but for me only the finale made a lasting impression.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Overture from the Magic Flute* opened the afternoon's performance. After waiting for several minutes for the audience to hush, conductor Donald Schleicher led the orchestra into its first soothing chords. The piece featured pulsating runs and a beautiful bassoon and flute melody, and I thoroughly enjoyed the bold yet lyrical performance.

Los Angeles Philharmonic concertmaster and solo violinist Martin Chalifour joined the orchestra to perform the *Concerto in D Major for Violin & Orchestra, Op. 35*. Based on themes from his work for 1930s Hollywood films, Erich Wolfgang Korngold's concerto showcased Chalifour's clear tone, pitch accuracy, and overall mastery of the violin. I was easily able to imagine Hollywood actors playing out melodramatic scenes to the romantic score. I only wished Korngold had written more of the piece in the lower voices of the violin. Chalifour's highest string got quite a workout during every movement, but he only left it for short interludes during the entire piece.

During the first two movements, Chalifour demonstrated his agility and lyricism. A theme resurfaced several times during each movement in which the violin reached down for a tantalizing measure or two and then swept back into the upper regions of the instrument. Chromatic passages joined with pleasing themes to create a voice that was in turn breathy, concerned, frantic, and passionate.

The finale was a playful movement, during which Chalifour and the orchestra let loose a bit and had some fun. Korngold took the theme from his score for *The Prince & the Pauper*, and I could imagine the two boys dancing around to the lively music. I felt the piece provided a change of aural scenery, but it didn't really touch the heartstrings.

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Finally, the full orchestra took the stage, performing an orchestration of Johannes Brahms' *Piano Quartet in G Minor, Op. 25*.

Arnold Schoenberg resoundingly succeeded in transforming the piece, written for only four performers, into a passionate score for full orchestra. I laud the symphony for this performance, as soloists, sections, and the full orchestra wove a textured tapestry of sound to please the soul.

The first movement began with a deceptively complex eight-note theme introduced by the clarinets. It passed throughout the symphony in various orchestrations, dynamics, and keys until the movement faded away.

The second movement featured several soloists, including a fluttering flute, clear French horn, and impressive clarinet. At the end, a dreamlike section featured Schleicher waving a "magic wand" as the clarinet and flute created a fairy-like ending.

A contrasting robust chord progression introduced the third movement. It changed into a treading march-like theme, which was replaced periodically with flowing interludes. The piece ended with a sweet, delicate chord. The final movement began at breakneck speed, which Schleicher periodically but suddenly slowed for about a measure. The most moving moment occurred as the clarinet held a long note at the end of a passage, swelled to an almost painful dynamic, and then de-crescendomed while playing arpeggios back down the scale. Later, during a beautiful violin, cello, and viola passage, the clarinet entered with an almost jazzy interjection. A lot of fun and impressive in pace, tone quality, and passion, the orchestra ended the quartet for full orchestra with bows waving, cymbals crashing, and fingers flying.