

Bohemian Rhapsody: The Quad City Symphony, October 6 at the Adler Theatre

Written by Frederick Morden

Wednesday, 17 October 2012 07:54

- [Buy Cheap Xilisoft 1click DV to DVD](#)
- [19.95\\$ Vemedio Snowtape 2 MAC cheap oem](#)
- [Buy Adobe Creative Suite 6 Master Collection MAC \(en,ja,de,es,fr,it,nl,pt,sv\)](#)
- [Download Autodesk AutoCAD Electrical 2014 \(64-bit\)](#)
- [Buy Cheap Adobe Creative Suite 5.5 Design Premium Student And Teacher Edition MAC](#)
- [Buy Cheap Adobe Photoshop CS6 Top 100 Simplified Tips and Tricks](#)
- [Buy Cheap Adobe Flash Professional CS6 MAC](#)
- [Buy Cheap Adobe Creative Suite 5.5 Design Standard](#)
- [59.95\\$ ActiveState Komodo IDE 5 cheap oem](#)
- [Buy Cheap NewBlue Titler Pro](#)
- [Buy Cheap Steinberg Cubase 5](#)
- [Download Autodesk AutoCAD Architecture 2014 \(64-bit\)](#)
- [49.95\\$ Eset Smart Security 6 \(32-bit\) cheap oem](#)
- [Discount - Alien Skin Eye Candy 7 MAC](#)

It was standard repertoire in the expected order, but the performance that Music Director and Conductor Mark Russell Smith and the orchestra gave at the opening of the Quad City Symphony's 98th Masterworks Series on October 6 was anything but typical because of the thorough, culturally sensitive thinking behind the showcase piece.

Richard Wagner's youthful *Overture to Rienzi* and Max Bruch's lyric *Violin Concerto No. 1* were executed consistent with German performance practices, largely confined to the composer's instructions in the score. But Smith created a sharp contrast of musical styles to the concert's first two pieces with "country kid" Antonín Dvořák's *Symphony No. 8*

. Instead of the typical literal interpretation of the score, he transformed it through unwritten, more-expressive Bohemian playing techniques, creating a performance that felt authentic – similar to what audiences might have heard in its Dvořák-conducted 1890 debut in Prague.

Smith modified Dvořák's music by altering marked tempos and adding indigenous musical nuances. The second movement was slower than indicated in the score, allowing for a wider, more dramatic expansion of tension and conversely more transparency and serenity in lyrical sections. Each additional dance-like lift of the bow, gypsy slide of the finger along the fingerboard, and kick of a beat moved the feel of the music away from Germany and deeper into central Europe.

While the artistic interpretation of Dvořák seemed clear, the performance itself was uneven, with

Bohemian Rhapsody: The Quad City Symphony, October 6 at the Adler Theatre

Written by Frederick Morden

Wednesday, 17 October 2012 07:54

moments of bold ensemble sturdiness interspersed with destabilizing rhythmic and tonal frailty. In the third movement, Smith's opening "Allegretto grazioso" was decidedly more "vivace" than the orchestra could maintain and slowly slipped into a more lilting tempo. Horns and trombones struggled with the composer's awkward octave leaps in chromatic sequences in the first movement, and the trumpets were challenged to match pitch in the last movement.

But generally speaking, the orchestra's collective tone was balanced, focused, and well-blended, activating rich overtones – the timbre sparkle that makes symphonic sound so compelling. When the horns, trombones, cellos, and basses played the same melodic fragments together – a common doubling in Dvořák – it created a robust, thick, broad-based core around which some of the most exciting moments were built.

In addition, principal wind players carefully shaped thematic phrases in both solo and duet sections. Clarinets were hauntingly quiet and mysterious in the lower reaches while a bit edgy up top. Horns provided a uniform section sound while offering a variety of colors in, for example, the well-defined trills in the symphony's last movement and the fluffy staccato notes in the second movement. The solo horn molded brief melodic lines into artful musical statements. In the second movement, the principal flute and oboe melted together in long, arching thematic lines, producing a clear, persuasive sound that soared over the violin spiccato accompaniments.

But the heart of this Dvořák interpretation was the stylized playing of the string section, bringing Bohemian legitimacy and emotion to the performance. Its ability to create a dichotomy of sounds – infusing suspense or intimacy into the soft parts, innocence or passion into tutti sections, and especially the portamento "sighing" into melodic lines – helped make the musical movement seem more elastic than the more restricted playing practices Americans normally hear. At the beginning of the last movement and just before its coda, the strings made the repeating phrases "breathe" through the natural ebb and flow of their bowing and generated excitement by applying pressure into the string. In melodic sections, the violins' tone and intensity were searing, and, in the variations of the last movement, pulling whole bows instead of chopping at the accented quarter notes added vitality to the dance-like rhythms.

The concert also introduced the Quad City Symphony's new concertmaster in a performance of Bruch's frequently played first violin concerto. Naha Greenholtz, winner of the orchestra's concertmaster search, played with grace and emotional conciseness. The petite sweetness of sound within her lyrical approach was an attractive veil that enhanced deep technical strength in a concerto based on double stops and virtuosity; she made something difficult sound elegantly easy. Never attacking the instrument, she produced a centered, always flowing smooth tone even in the rough spiccato sections. The challenging double and triple stops were not only in

Bohemian Rhapsody: The Quad City Symphony, October 6 at the Adler Theatre

Written by Frederick Morden

Wednesday, 17 October 2012 07:54

tune but skillfully integrated into her singing style of playing.

Soloist and conductor communicated effectively, producing sensitive, living musical exchanges. In the slow second movement, Smith gave Greenholtz plenty of time to make full, rich musical phrases, adding “gemütlichkeit” to the performance. There was supple melodic dovetailing between Greenholtz and the first violins, oboe, and flute. When playing by itself, the orchestra was carefully guided to radiant, climactic points, but it provided soft, placid – one might say “suppressed” – accompaniment that guaranteed the soloist was always heard. It will be interesting to see how Greenholtz influences the rest of the string section throughout the season.

Wagner’s *Rienzi* overture, with its amusing Italian march and melodic *Tristan* harbinger, had a tentative beginning but ultimately produced a rousing opening musical work despite the crisp, deep-sounding, but unfortunately smothering snare drum.

The second Masterworks concert of the season will be performed November 3 and 4 and will feature Mozart’s overture to The Magic Flute, his Concerto for Clarinet with soloist Burt Hara, and Beethoven’s Symph
ony No. 6

. For more information, visit

QCSymphony.com

Frederick Morden is a retired orchestra-music director, conductor, composer, arranger, educator, and writer who has served on the executive board of the Conductors Guild. He can be reached at f.morden@mchsi.com.