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By Lynn Green

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New

Old or new, it's all enjoyable music -

Traditional and contemporary classical music made for a well-rounded program when the ProMusica Chamber Orchestra presented "World of Wonder" last night at the Southern Theatre.

"Orchestras function as sonic museums, plus modern galleries," music director Timothy Russell explained after intermission.

The four composers on the program - Benjamin Britten, Ludwig von Beethoven, Joan Tower and Maurice Ravel - are all masters of orchestration, each uniquely utilizing the orchestra to create sonic artworks with individualistic color, phrasing and mood.

Britten's *Soirees Musicales*, based on themes by Gioachino Rossini, are a set of musical gems revised from one of Britten's film scores. At moments they demonstrate their film-score roots, and at other points they are indistinguishable from Rossini's original works. But they always are engaging without being cloying. The final two movements needed additional fire and humor, but overall the pieces were charming.

Beethoven's *Symphony No. 8* was vibrant without overdoing the composer's natural intensity. Some of the softer sections had minor intonation problems, but a larger concern was the dominance of the violins in the louder sections. A better balance will allow even more of the rhythmic and melodic excitement to shine through.

Made in America, a 2005 work by Tower, is at once novel and familiar, working a phrase from *America the Beautiful* into a fantasia of brilliant, blazing colors. From noisy urban spaces to mysterious natural wonders, Tower captures a pastiche of American images.

Guest soloist Joel Fan joined the orchestra for Ravel's *Piano Concerto in G major*. Fan was a last-minute replacement for Martina Filjak, who canceled because of illness. Fan adeptly captured Ravel's iconic French style.

The smallish crowd belied a program that was very enjoyable.

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