



The Pueblo Chieftain

SYMPHONY DOES NICE JOB WITH CONTRASTING STYLES

BY PIERRE KENYON

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On Saturday night, a nearly full house at Hoag Hall, on the Colorado State University-Pueblo campus, enjoyed the Pueblo Symphony's performances of two great musical compositions by Brahms and Rachmaninoff, under the direction of Jacob Chi.

It was a wonderful, though contrasting, program, combining, perhaps, two prime examples of music in the classical and romantic veins.

Contrary to his times, Brahms did not appreciate the dramatic style on such a scale as evident in the works of Wagner and Liszt. Indeed, some thought Brahms to be old-fashioned, even dull, in his adherence to classical forms and tradition.

Chi, in his introductory remarks before conducting the Brahms piece, demonstrated how Brahms and Beethoven walked, which was very enlightening, along with mentioning happenings contemporaneous to Brahms' time. Currently, the art of the great sculptor, Rodin, appeared along with the French Impressionists, Edison's invention of the phonograph, and the first time frozen meat was shipped from South America to Europe. Wow! I think we got the picture.

But, as clearly shown in the playing of the Brahms Symphony No. 2 by the Pueblo Symphony, although the form was classical, the treatment in the four movements was certainly romantic with its lyrical and pastoral themes tugging at the listener's heart strings.

Though the evening's program was billed as "Music of the Young Masters," it's difficult for me to perceive the significance of that description when Brahms took 10 years to write his first symphony, then wrote his second at the mature age of 40. However, the other heading on the program sheet, "Young at Heart" seemed apt enough. Following intermission, it was Joel Fan, the guest artist's, turn to shine in his exciting performance of the ever-popular Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No. 2.

At rehearsal, on the previous evening, Chi was concerned about the balance between the piano and the orchestra. Fan also had the same concern along with having to choose among the two pianos available to him. Interestingly enough, after playing each piano along with the orchestra, Chi and Fan made the same choice.

To this observer, the piano chosen had more depth, more harmonics were evident, and, perhaps, a better definition in tone, though somewhat less bright than the other.

At any rate, Fan took full advantage of the piano chosen by demonstrating, in an exciting manner, his mastery of the instrument in Saturday night's performance.

Some people have said the Rachmaninoff Concerto No. 2 is a bit too sugary or sentimental for their taste. I don't buy that view, though, let's face it, the music is simply gorgeous and one can get carried away by the great emotional sweep of it. Fan's interpretation certainly provided ample opportunities for that to happen.

As to the balance achieved by Fan, the pianist and the orchestra, conducted by Chi, I'd say, for the most part, it worked well. In a few of the louder passages in the first movement, the brass and horns seemed to dominate. That may be due in part to the placement of the reflective panels behind and above the orchestra.

The audience showed its appreciation of the work of guest artist, Fan, and the Pueblo Symphony by giving them three standing ovations and prolonged applause. Fan graciously played an encore, the second movement of a piano sonata by Rachmaninoff. Fan's performance of it was sensitive, poignant and memorable.

I should like to point out the program notes provided by James Duncan that added much to the insight and understanding of the composers and their music.

Next on the agenda for the Pueblo Symphony will be the season's finale, "USO, A Tribute to Veterans," on April 30, at Hoag Recital Hall at 7:30 p.m. Call 545-7967 for tickets and information.