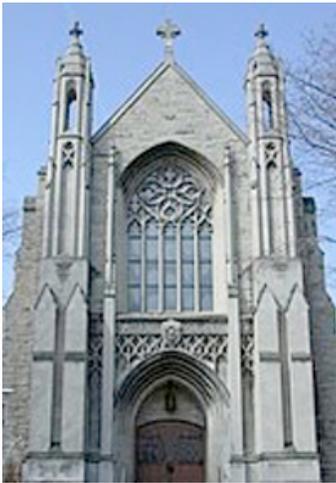


Review

Youngstown Symphony Stained Glass Concert at Martin Luther Church (November 10)

by Robert Rollin



This past Sunday the Youngstown Symphony, directed by Randall Fleisher, played its third Stained Glass Concert at the Martin Luther Lutheran Church, one of the city's most beautiful places of worship. This new series, instituted last year, involves visits by a small orchestral core to area churches, and interaction with local ensembles. The stunning sanctuary gave the impression of an old European church, with a delicately latticed hand-carved wood altarpiece.

The concert amounted to a lively *mélange* of short classical chestnuts combined with some popular pieces. The afternoon's highlight was the performance of Mozart's *Ave Verum Corpus* by the Martin Luther Lutheran Church Chancel Choir accompanied by the Youngstown Symphony. Anthony Ruggiero, choir director, had prepared the small group well. The lovely gentle choral sounds melded beautifully to the accompanying strings.

The performances of two movements from the Vivaldi *Four Seasons* were just as wonderful. Concertmaster Calvin Lewis served as the soloist for *Spring*, and the other violins divided to depict individual birdcalls. Lewis was excellent and the small orchestra, gorgeous. *Summer* seemed to suggest a thunderstorm with rain and lightening, and Lewis again played with flair. The Bach *Air on the G String* from the *Suite No. 3 for Orchestra*, was the other Baroque era piece performed. The tempo seemed a bit fast for this moving work.

Four Romantic era pieces also appeared on the program. A short selection from Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* had fine solos by oboe and French horn. *Morning*, from Edvard Grieg's *Peer Gynt Suite*, depicted sunrise with wonderful alternating flute and oboe entrances. A brilliant French horn passage followed suggesting the bright light of day. Pietro Mascagni's opera *Cavalleria Rusticana* provided an attractive instrumental *Intermezzo* that originally separated two operatic scenes. Again, a magnificent oboe melody enlivened the music. Johann Strauss' famous *Pizzicato Polka* consisted exclusively of plucked strings.

Aaron Copland's *Hoedown* from the ballet *Rodeo* was a twentieth century selection that depicted a fast rustic western dance. Fine oboe playing and thick rhythmic string writing got the audience's feet tapping.

Fleischer conducted his own attractive arrangement of *Jerusalem of Gold*, a traditional Hebrew song. Inspired by his visit to the Wailing Wall, the last vestige of the original temple, the piece began with a free section and a Middle Eastern-sounding flute line, followed by a foreground cello section lead and an interesting doubling of French horn and flute. After another Middle Eastern treatment, this time on the oboe, a loud melodic statement appeared in French horn and trumpet, followed by a full thematic rendition on solo cello. A hint of the beginning of the Israeli National Anthem closed the piece.

To close the concert, a trio of area singers, James McClellan, Eric McClellan, and Janeen Williams, accompanied by the Chancel Choir and the Symphony, sang three popular numbers. These were *I Believe in Every Drop of Rain that Falls*, *Go Into the World*, and *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*. The latter, Martin Luther's old hymn, received a surprisingly rapid arrangement.

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