

## CityMusic Cleveland at Lakewood Presbyterian Church (October 15)

by Daniel Hathaway



CityMusic Cleveland presented the first concert in its current five-program set on Wednesday, October 15 to a good-sized crowd at Lakewood Presbyterian Church. Under the direction of music director Avner Dorman, the chamber orchestra played symphonies by Mozart and Haydn and gave the Cleveland premiere of Dorman's *Saxophone Concerto* with Timothy McAllister as soloist. To round out the two-hour program, the orchestra highlighted its wind section (plus cello and bass) in Dvořák's *Serenade, op. 44*.

Dorman's concerto was written to be performed by the Israel Camerata in 2003 but never made it to the stage. In describing the piece, the composer notes that the original meaning of "concerto" was a "contest," and in this case the piece is a musical tug-of-war between a jazz saxophonist and a classical ensemble. Like the Pied Piper, the soloist wants to lure the orchestra into his world. They're intrigued, but ultimately don't buy it and the soloist stalks off playing riffs to himself.

That's the underlying narrative, and it really doesn't matter if it isn't so clearly expressed in the music. Dorman has created an attractive and accessible piece that asks a lot from the soloist. Playing soprano sax, Timothy McAllister flew through complicated passagework, produced high notes of arresting intensity and intoned lyrical lines with soul and playfulness. The orchestra spurned him stylishly, and a drum set added a special flavor to the piece.

The concert began and ended with symphonies: Mozart's *Haffner* (No. 35) and Haydn's *Farewell* (No. 45). Mozart received a clean, straightforward performance with all its details in place, while the Haydn was presented with a bit of extra drama. The brightly lit church sanctuary was plunged into darkness and the orchestra read their music with the help of little LED stand lights — not exactly the candlelit ambiance Dorman was after, but an interesting effect. The audience was appropriately amused as the players left one

by one and in groups in this early example of a labor action, then jolted back into reality when the lights suddenly came on.

After intermission and before the Haydn, the winds opened the second half of the concert with a distinguished reading of Dvořák's wind serenade — a work that seemingly never fails to charm its listeners. Fine intonation and uniformly excellent tone and ensemble made this piece a standout. Dorman mentioned in his pre-concert remarks that he intended to showcase the orchestra's wind players in the opening concert of each CityMusic season — a policy that bore particularly rich fruit on Wednesday evening.

*This program is to be repeated from October 16-19 in venues in Cleveland, Willoughby Hills and University Heights. See the ClevelandClassical concert listings for details.*

*Published on ClevelandClassical.com October 18, 2014.*

*Click here for a printable copy of this article*

[Return to the Front Page.](#)