

Candlelight Concert makes light with music

By ROJEAN TULK
Portland Symphony Chamber Orchestra
Candlelight Concert Series
Portland's Sonesta Ballroom
Sunday, April 2; 3 and 7 p.m.

If Portland Symphony Orchestra conductor Toshiyuki Shimada ever quits conducting — say, because of a bad case of bursitis in his baton arm — he could probably make it as a stand-up comedian.

Anyone who has attended a PSO Pops or Candlelight Concert has seen the maestro exhibit his tongue-in-cheek brand of humor. Sunday's Candlelight Concerts, performed at Portland's Sonesta Ballroom, left no doubt that Shimada knows how to draw more than a chuckle from his audience.

These concerts commemorated April Fool's Day and Shimada promised that we would hear "three quarters very humorous music."

The concert opened with William Bolcom's "Comedia," a piece Shimada called "musical burlesque." The 10-year-old piece produced the typical modern effects and motifs.

However, rather than being a noisy, disjointed mindbender, "Comedia" mercifully poked fun at itself. Horns blared, strings blurred, timpani boomed.

Mozart's "Ein Musikalischer Spass (A Musical Joke)" followed.

Concert review

Mozart wrote the piece to mock mediocre composers and amateur musicians. It features undeveloped motifs and out-of-tune horn parts.

The PSO members feigned a pompous air while they played. During the "Adagio," the horn players left the stage and went to sit at a table with the audience.

At the end, concertmaster Sandra Kott played a beautiful cadenza. It began to shift us to a more serious mode, but just as we started to settle there, Kott ran up the board with an uncharacteristic whole-tone scale and topped it off with an anticlimactic wimpy pluck. Ha, ha, Wolfgang.

The second half of the concert opened on a more serious note with the concert's featured soloist, PSO's principal clarinetist Thomas Parchman.

He performed Franz Krommer's "Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra in E Minor." Written in 1809, the piece conveys a serious tone.

Parchman, on the other hand, conveyed a beautiful, rich tone. He ranged all over the instrument without a squeak, squawk, or other ducklike utterance.

Granted, one would not expect too many awful noises from a principal player. However,

Parchman's performance was truly flawless.

The show closed with Haydn's "Symphony No. 45 in F-Sharp Minor." Known simply as "Farewell," it was written one spring just before the composer and his orchestra musicians, who all worked for an Austrian prince, were due to go on vacation.

The prince, however, kept everyone at the palace week after week in order to get the piece just right. Haydn, apparently quite a comedian himself, dubbed the symphony "Farewell" as a hint to the prince.

Shimada informed us that we would see the piece performed with complete authenticity. We didn't understand what he meant.

But, halfway through the final movement, some musicians got up, clicked off their music stand lights, and walked out.

More measures were played, and more musicians walked out. One of the chandeliers was turned off. More measures played. More musicians walked out. Another light turned off. Etc.

And when only a few musicians continued playing, Shimada walked out! Finally, only violinists Kott and Ray Shows remained to finish the piece. When they concluded, they switched off their lights and left. Farewell.

RoJean Tulk is a musician and teacher of piano and voice.

GEWANDHAUS ORCI
OF LEIPZIG, KURT MAS

Wednesday, April 5 7:30 p.m.
Portland City Hall Auditorium
Beethoven "Leonore" Overture No. 2
Schumann Symphony No. 1 ("Spring S")
Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 4



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