

All-Mozart program follows script beautifully

The orchestra and soloist shine in the Oregon Mozart Players' annual show

By Terry McQuilkin
For The Register-Guard

Posted to Web: **Tuesday**, *Mar 3, 2009 02:37PM*
Appeared in print: **Tuesday**, *Mar 3, 2009, page E5*

A longstanding tradition was honored Saturday evening at the Hult Center, where an enthusiastic audience heard the Oregon Mozart Players present the annual "All-Amadeus" concert.

Typically, such all-Mozart programs follow this plan: Open with a little-known work, close with one of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's best symphonies, and between the two feature an outstanding soloist. Saturday's program (which was repeated Sunday) was no exception.

The soloist on this occasion was Allan Vogel, who occupies the principal chair in the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, and as principal oboist in the Oregon Bach Festival Orchestra, is a familiar and much-loved presence to Eugene audiences. Displaying a countenance that conveyed his utter delight in playing the work, Vogel offered an elegant and stylish performance of the Oboe Concerto in C, K. 314. His tone was warm and pellucid, and conductor Glen Cortese and the Mozart Players offered solid but never intrusive support.

While the concerto, like all of the composer's wind concertos, gives the soloist plenty of opportunities to demonstrate technical prowess, it is in the songlike passages that the instrument is most glorious. Vogel sculpted melodic lines artfully and with telling nuance. Each movement included a cadenza composed by the oboist, each fitting perfectly into the Mozartian fabric.

The lesser-known piece on this weekend's program was the opening work, the Divertimento in D, K. 251. Scored for one oboe, two horns and strings, the 1776 composition was, like all divertimenti, intended as light entertainment music. The six-movement work would have some trouble holding its own in the concert hall, were it not for the effectiveness of the solo playing exhibited by several of the orchestra's principals.

Departing from the usual ternary structure for Classical Era minuets, the Divertimento's fourth movement is a set of variations, and it gave concertmaster Alice Blankenship and principal second violinist Yvonne Hsueh several chances to display their extraordinary musicianship. Both played with fervor, refinement and sure-footed accuracy, and their contrapuntal interplay evidenced remarkable synergy.

That movement also gave the orchestra's principal oboist, Cheryl Denice, an opportunity to demonstrate her vibrant tone and facile technique. Her sweet, warm sound and nuanced phrasing brought poignancy to the preceding Andantino, and the subtlety of her playing on the opening movement's second theme served as a nice foil to the vigor and urgency with which the opening theme was delivered.

Cortese led the orchestra in reading characterized by spiritedness and vigor, and aside from a moment or two in the rondo, great clarity and precision. A tip of the hat to horn players David Kruse and Brad

Kintscher, who also had a few moments in the limelight, particularly in the first of the minuet movements.

A more substantial work came after intermission. While the Symphony No. 25, K. 183 isn't one of Mozart's mature symphonies (he was 17 when he wrote it) it is often considered his best (surely the most frequently performed) among those written prior to No. 31. As Cortese noted, it is one of only two minor-key symphonies in the composer's output (both in G minor) and is a good example of Sturm und Drang. The conductor made the most of the symphony's dramatic elements, infusing the driving syncopated lines that open the work with propulsive tension and delivering the frenetic semiquaver motive with explosive power.

Throughout the movement, as in the haunting Allegro that ends the symphony, the chamber orchestra produced a remarkably full, rich sound, and executed rapid passagework with cohesiveness, although the horns weren't always spot on.

The two middle movements present a nice contrast to the stormy outer movements. In the Andante, muted strings utter a series of sweet, sighing gestures, and under Cortese, the ensemble played with warmth and delicateness.

The symphony's third movement displays two distinct moods: The stately but severe Minuetto section, played here with conviction, and the charming trio section, scored for the six winds only (oboes, bassoons and horns), which offered a wonderful minute or two of sunny optimism.

Terry McQuilkin, an adjunct instructor of composition at the University of Oregon, reviews classical music for The Register-Guard.