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Packed house for classical concert

Choir of the Sound collaborates with CSO, EdCC's Symphonic Choir

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For the Enterprise*

There wasn't a seat to be had when Choir of the Sound hosted Cascade Symphony and Edmonds Community College's Symphonic Choir in their Classical Concert 2007 at the Edmonds Center for the Performing Arts last Sunday afternoon. The place was packed and rightly so.

Centering the program of more than two hours was German composer Carl Orff's monumental "Carmina Burana" for voice and orchestra. The work consists of 13th-century songs and poetry sung in High German, Church Latin and Old French and set in an amalgam of primitive, modern and medieval musical styles. It's not much on sustained melodies and themes, heavy in an almost brutal way on percussion and yet, lyrical, raucous, public in scope and at times, privately intimate to an embarrassing degree.

Sounds like a handful, huh?

Not really; not when you remember chunks of the "Burana" appear in soundtracks from such diverse pop films as "Natural Born Killers" "Excalibur" and "Jackass."

Also, the "Burana" celebrates love, lust and the joys of reckless drinking; notions which come through loud and clear regardless of the esoteric languages they are sung in and the complexities of musicianship Orff wrestled with.

Nor did it hurt any that Michael Miropolosky was like a kid on a playground conducting Cascade Symphony Orchestra and upwards of two hundred vocalists from Choir of the Sound and the Shoreline Singers, all at the same time. Miropolosky had an obviously fun time.

As did the guest artists.

Baritone Erich Parce couldn't help but crack a smile singing about the heat of love and pleasures of drinking and gambling. Soprano Caherine Haight put a kind of straight-faced, if not wry humor to the physical act of males and females coupling everywhere in the "Amor volat undique," Cupid flies everywhere. Tenor Howard L. Fankhauser added a comical note with his portrayal of a man gone crazy with lust and burning up on the inside. My God, the man was in pain.

In short, a work that on the surface appears remote, maybe irrelevant, was made accessible and exciting through the mature efforts of musicians and vocalists enthused about what they were doing. A more rousing "Carmina Burana" is hard to imagine.

In addition, buttressing Orff's masterpiece by way of introduction to it were the Edmonds CC Symphonic Choir, Kirk Marcy directing, and Choir of the Sound, Judy Filibeck, directing; both singing sets of their own. Together, they made for an interesting contrast. Generally speaking, the Symphonic Choir focused on simple, straight forward, first person hymns of a lyrical, personal and religious nature while COS took on an increasingly complex litany of hymns, songs of religious joy and a spiritual. The Symphonic Choir was a little stiff, not entirely sure of itself; and Choir of the Sound, loose, confident more at one with the compositions they addressed.

Choir of the Sound Classical Concert 2007 impressed me as an update on the state of our community's music. It is accomplished, dedicated and promises to get better and better.

Reactions? Comments? E-mail Dale Burrows at grayghost7@comcast.net.

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