

## **Mozart 'sampler' charms, delights Palm Beach Symphony displays high level of artistry**

**By KEN KEATON , Special To The Daily News**

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If there has ever been a composer whose works so perfectly embody the sublime, the beautiful, the graceful, the elegant . . . if there has ever been a more humane composer than Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, I am unaware of such a figure's existence. The entire season of performances by the Palm Beach Symphony, under the leadership of Conductor Ray Robinson, will be devoted to the music of this remarkable composer, to celebrate the 250th anniversary of his birth.

Wednesday's concert was the first in the series, one of five Subscription Concerts. This is appropriate, since during Mozart's final decade, he supported himself with subscription concerts devoted to his own music. The instruments are modern, but the layout at the Flagler Museum was an approximation of the concerts of Mozart's time: the orchestra was in the center of a large room, with the audience surrounding the performers.

This performance, designated A Mozart Sampler, featured some of Mozart's lesser-known works. The *Divertimento in D*, K136, opened the concert. This was a three-movement work, in the style of the early symphony, written when Mozart was 16 years old. The playful energy of the outer movements and the honeyed lyricism of the central, slow movement were elegant and satisfying. The strings played as a single voice, with a rich, burnished tone. The precision of the violins was impressive.

The *Rondo in D*, K382, for piano and orchestra, began its life as an alternate closing movement for Mozart's *Concerto no. 5*, K175, and is often heard as an independent work. Soloist Robin Arrigo played with a delightful sense of style, and made one wish to hear her in a more substantial work, such as one of the later concertos.

The first half of the concert closed with Mozart's masterpiece of his early period: the motet *Esultate, jubilate*, K165. The work is nothing less than a concerto for singer, complete with an orchestral exposition and cadenzas. Soprano Megan Besley has it all: gorgeous tone, clear diction, a perfect balance in all registers, crystal-clear passagio. Her performance of this astonishing work was eminently satisfying. Look for her in future Mozart performances.

The second half began with the evergreen *Eine kleine nachtmusik*. The title was accidental. Mozart notated the work as "a little night music," to indicate that it was to be an unnamed nocturne, but the title has been imbedded over time. The performance was perfectly Apollonian, which is to say delightful. Tempos were energetic without being hurried, and lyric passages were as sweet as the Viennese pastries the composer so loved.

The conclusion of the concert was Mozart's dance music, *Six German Dances*, K509, and the *Sleigh Ride*, K605, no. 3. During the final years of his life, Mozart found lucrative employment as the Royal Imperial Chamber Composer, and his duties were mainly to provide dances for the popular halls of Vienna. He once commented bitterly

that his recompense for such compositions was "too much for what I do . . . too little for what I can do."

An inspired idea for this performance was to include the Demetrius Klein Dancers, choreographing to the music. The music included double winds and brass, along with tympani, which during the time would have cut through the cacophonous sounds of the hall. Particularly fine piccolo playing was heard from an uncredited player.

The dancers were all prettiness, innocence and charm, and the presentation was utterly enjoyable. Future concerts in this series may present works of greater profundity, but if Robinson maintains this high level of artistry, our community will be fortunate indeed.