

Semkow conducts outstanding concert

You would expect to find a strong correlation between a work's musical value and the number of times it has been performed. Such a correlation exists with most works, but some masterpieces tend to fall between the cracks, in spite of good intentions and most of these seem to be choral works. One such work is Mozart's Mass in C Minor, which received its first Detroit Symphony Orchestra performance last week.

The large audience for an all-Mozart program at Orchestra Hall last Friday night was partly attributed to the increased appeal of Mozart's music after the film "Amadeus."

Guest conductor Jerry Semkow has been appearing here regularly,



Avigdor Zaromp

always with impressive results. The solo singers, however, made their Detroit Symphony Orchestra debut on this occasion. They were Juliana soprano, Linda Zoghy, mezzo soprano, David Kuehler, tenor, and Christopher Trakas, baritone. Gondek and Zoghy were substitutes for others originally scheduled.

Technically, the Mass in C Minor is incomplete. However, like several other incomplete works, it towers above the ordinary. Parts of it revert stylistically to the baroque and would have undoubtedly received a good grade by Bach, had he lived long enough to hear it (which would have made him almost 100 years old).

All portions, however, are convincing testament to Mozart's genius.

To hear this masterpiece performed by such capable forces is among the most elevating of musical experiences. The Detroit Symphony Chorus, under the direction of Eric Freudigman, rose to the occasion both literally, as custom dictates, as well as musically, which only talent can ensure. The soloists proved to be capable, for the most part, both in their solo roles as well as in combination.

Mozart provided more significant roles for the female singers in this work. Under the expert guidance of Semkow, there was a rare sense of proportion between orchestra, chorus and soloists. It is next to impossible to define the difference between acceptable, competent and outstanding. But this performance was a rare manifestation of the latter.

If the C Minor Mass was the main

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attraction on this program, the other item — the Symphony No. 35 ("Haffner") shouldn't be overlooked. This symphony, which opened the program, is performed with more regularity and is thus part of the standard repertoire. Its performance, however, was anything but standard.

The well-focused themes, the shapely phrases and dynamic contrasts made every bar appealing, without overstepping the limits of

Mozart's style. I have heard it suggested that symphonies written by masters from later periods made Mozart's symphonies almost obsolete. This performance was a most convincing demonstration of the absurdity of such notion.

Semkow will be also the guest conductor this week, with a program consisting of Haydn's Oboe Concerto, the Symphony No. 3 by Honegger and the Symphony No. 4 by Tchaikovsky.

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