



# CAPE COD TIMES

MONDAY, JANUARY 24, 2011

## Chorus illuminates Brahms' uplifting requiem

By W. HENRY DUCKHAM  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Before Johannes Brahms wrote "A German Requiem," first performed in its final seven-movement form in Leipzig in 1869, he was considered an up-and-coming composer. After the requiem he was acknowledged as having lived up to Robert Schumann's prophesy that he would become a towering figure.

### Concert REVIEW

Although Brahms was guarded about his private thoughts, the impetus for the work was highly personal and stemmed from the death of both his friend and spiritual mentor, Schumann, and his mother, Christiane, in 1865. This requiem created a new sensibility and broke from previous requiems directed to the dead and based on Latin texts. Rather, Brahms chose to compose a comforting testament to the living.

The work starts and ends with the word "Selig" (blessing) — the first a blessing for the living, the last for the departed. Conductor Pak, during an after-concert discussion, said that in order to create contrast to the slower movements that followed, he had provided a faster

### IN CONCERT

■ **What:** Brahms' Requiem, Cape Cod Symphony Orchestra, Jung-Ho Pak, conductor, with Gloriam Dei Cantores chorus, Adrienne Danrich and Thomas Jones, soloists

■ **When:** Saturday, Jan. 22, and Sunday, Jan. 23

■ **Where:** Barnstable Performing Arts Center

pace for the first. And in this opening movement, we heard deft and attentive work from the orchestra with particularly solid and mellifluous playing by the principal horn and oboe.

However, the guiding light of the performance was the splendid singers of the Gloriam Dei Cantores ("Singers to the Glory of God") under the direction of David Chalmers. Smaller in number than those usually deployed, the chorus lacked nothing in spirit and heft. Its commitment was evident, as the singers had spent a year learning the work and impressively performed it without music.

An internationally known group ranging in age from 17 to 70, the choir is based in Orleans. The singers exhibited strength in each section, especially distinctive and notable in the sixth movement: "Lord, You are worthy to receive praise and glory and power."

In the post-concert discussion, soprano soloist Adrienne Danrich provided an interesting insight, pointing out that she and baritone Thomas Jones were essentially commentators and the starring role fell to the chorus. But there was no diminishment in her performance; in the fifth section the soprano sang with a lovely radiance and distinctive dark coloring, encompassing the hall despite its somewhat dry acoustics. And baritone Jones projected a ringing and appealingly well-articulated enunciation of the solos in movements three and six.

It was a splendid night at the Performing Arts Center and congratulations are due to all who made the event possible, tying together chorus, orchestra and soloists in a memorable performance of one of the great works in all of music. w

## Munich Symphony Orchestra and Glorïae Dei Cantores together in concert

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### The Munich Symphony Orchestra

GRANVILLE, Ohio-The Munich Symphony Orchestra, together with the Glorïae Dei Cantores and Denison University's own Chamber Singers, will present an evening of magnificent choral and instrumental music under the direction of internationally renowned artist Philippe Entremont. The Vail Series event will take place at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 27, in Swasey Chapel (200 Chapel Drive). A limited number of tickets may be offered for sale to the general public at \$15 if space allows. Details will be posted at [www.vailseries.org](http://www.vailseries.org) or call 740-587-6557.

Founded in 1945, the Munich Symphony Orchestra holds an extensive repertoire of technically demanding symphonic concert pieces, as well as performances of opera, light opera, musicals and ballets, oratorios and church music. This is the second collaboration of the Symphony with conductor and piano soloist Entremont, who has won worldwide acclaim for the elegance and panache of his playing and his illuminating interpretations from the podium. The Symphony will present the lushly romantic tonal work, "Verklärte Nacht," (Transfigured Night) by 20th century composer Arnold Schoenberg. It is considered by many to be his earliest important work.

The inspirational 40-voice choir, Glorïae Dei Cantores (Singers to the Glory of God), is known for their expressive and passionate explorations of sacred choir music, in several languages and of all historic periods and styles. The Choir has traveled extensively across Europe, Asia and North America to widespread critical acclaim. They will join the Munich Symphony Orchestra and Denison University's Chamber Singers to present Mozart's glorious "Requiem."

The Vail Series will continue its 32nd season with performances by the premiere North American performance of dancer Dada Masilo on Friday, Feb. 3; and chamber orchestra The Knights on Wednesday, April 11.

Endowed by a generous gift from the late Mary and Foster McGaw in honor of Jeanne Vail, class of 1946, the Vail Series brings to Denison the world's premier performers, as well as emerging musical talents, enriching the artistic experience of the entire Denison community. During the series' 31 years at Denison, such extraordinary talents as Joshua Bell, Renée Fleming, Mark O'Connor, Itzhak Perlman, Wynton Marsalis, Leontyne Price, Dizzy Gillespie, Emanuel Ax, Béla Fleck, Bobby McFerrin, and, of course, Yo-Yo Ma, have graced the stage of Swasey Chapel.

## Munich Symphony and Glorïae Dei Cantores: brilliant and moving

November 7, 2011  
Amy Flamminio

Lincoln turned out in force tonight, despite the rain, to hear the Munich Symphony Orchestra and Glorïae Dei Cantores perform an all Mozart concert.

The first half of the concert, the Munich Symphony, under the direction of the gracious Philippe Entremont, charmed and delighted the full Lied Center audience with a Mozart Serenade and the Piano Concerto no. 12. From the conductor's gestures to the performers and out to the audience was a brilliant conveyance of musical ideas and motives.

Philippe Entremont's performance as soloist and conductor for the Piano Concerto was crystalline and refined, just as Mozart designed it to be.

The last half of the concert was entirely composed of Mozart's crowning work, the Requiem in D minor. From beginning to end, a silence pervaded the audience. The Glorïae Dei Cantores, joined with singers from the community, gave a beautiful and reverent rendering of the Requiem Mass.

From the wrath and judgement of the "Dies Irae" to the peace and hope of "Lux Aeterna," the music moved the audience to a true sense of hope.

Returning once again to the rainy night, every audience member left with an experience of exquisite beauty and a sense of true hope.



*The Glorïae Dei Cantores who were heard in Lincoln with the Munich Symphony Orchestra performing Mozart's Requiem on Monday, November 7.*

*Photo credit: copyright Steve J. Sherman, used with permission*

## REVIEW

## 'Requiem' a little too hasty

Gloriæ Dei Cantores and Munich Orchestra bring skill, care to Mozart, but delicate touches lost at times.

By GREG STEPANICH

Special to the Daily News

It was during this very week 220 years ago that Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart became too sick to work, dying in early December of kidney failure at the age of just 35.

Small wonder that the *Requiem* he was working on at the time has haunted the cultural memory, the more so because he left it unfinished. But it's still a torso, beautiful as it is, and making it work requires skill and care.

And it got plenty of both Tuesday night at the Kravis Center, as the house opened this season's Regional Arts series with a performance of *Requiem* by the Gloriæ Dei Cantores choir of Orleans, Mass., and the Munich Symphony. French pianist and conductor Philippe Entremont led the chorus, orchestra and four good soloists in a reading of the work that at its best was lovely and even exciting, especially during the vigorous *fugal* passages.

Overall, though, this was a performance in which tempos were somewhat rushed, and points of repose in the music that help give it shape were insufficiently attended

to. With all that talent on the stage of Dreyfoos Hall, it's unfortunate that a more balanced rendition of the *Requiem* couldn't be had.

Not that it was a bad performance by any means. The 40-voice choir, for one, sang entirely from memory, a laudable feat, and demonstrated all the agility you want from a massed-voice ensemble, from wide dynamic range to difficult Handelian counterpoint. The soloists — sopranos Valentina Fleer and Julie Cherrier, tenor Eric Barry and baritone Benjamin Bloomfield — acquitted themselves well in their solos, though their ensemble blend was somewhat rough around the edges.

And the orchestra was excellent, with admirable unity in the instrumental sections and a nimble but full sound that allowed the *Requiem* to be big but not overwhelming. Only a couple out-of-tune closing chords marred its aural proceedings.

Entremont's approach, which favored brisk, no-nonsense tempos, also stressed clarity of line (you could see him marking out a descending inner voice in the chorus at one point). Things sounded springy and fresh, and the *Dies irae*, in particular, made a powerful impact. But

lost here were the delicate, more sensitive touches. For instance, there was little if any sense of breadth or subtlety in moments, such as the first soprano entrance at *Te decet hymnus, Deus in Sion*, one of the most sublime entrances in the literature, and one in which the operatic Mozart of the three great Da Ponte operas stands fully revealed.



**Entremont**  
French pianist and conductor favored brisk, no-nonsense tempos, and stressed clarity of line.

An emphasis on deliberation, on points of arrival, also was not to be found in the opening work on the program, Schoenberg's *Verklarte Nacht (Opus 4)*, in its string orchestra version. This was a canny piece of scheduling, since it shares its key (D minor) with the *Requiem*, as well as its craft heritage.

The string sound here was surpassingly beautiful, especially toward the end, when muted violins and violas trade a very soft *arpeggio* figure that shimmers in the background while high-climbing motifs float away in the first violins and cellos. It was magical, but it would have been even more effective had the key dramatic points in the music — such as the entrance of the cellos with the major-key theme — been given just a bit more room, perhaps in the form of a slower tempo, to breathe and have their say.



## **Munich Symphony, Gloriam Dei Cantores soar in concert at EKV Center for the Arts**

### **Concert Review**

By Bill Robinson, Senior News Writer

RICHMOND — Eastern Kentucky University's new Center for the Arts aimed high as it hosted its first highbrow event Wednesday.

After two country stars, an old rocker and the King of Blues, the center welcomed the Munich Symphony and the Gloriam Dei Cantores choir from Cape Cod.

While some large U.S. cities struggle to maintain a symphony orchestra, Munich, the capital of Bavaria, boasts four. With that embarrassment of riches, the city that gave birth to Oktoberfest can afford to loan one of its orchestras for an American tour.

Bavarians are reputed to be more carefree and fun-loving than their uptight Prussian or even Rhineland cousins. However, the Munich Symphony demonstrated its players have a passion for precision they can apply to strong emotion for a beautiful result.

The Bavarians fearlessly opened the concert with Arnold Schoenberg's "Transfigured Night," music that some may think too heavy for a provincial American audience, even a university town.

The audience listened attentively, however, seeming to hang on every note and musical nuance as 30 violins and violas, five cellos and four basses drew a musical picture of a married couple's troubled night that concludes with transfigured morning.

Schoenberg, a Viennese native, wrote "Transfigured Night" at age 25 in 1899. The mood of the Austrian capital that once whirled to the waltzes of Strauss is said to have fallen into a fatalistic despair as the century ran down, somehow anticipating the Austrian empire's defeat in World War I, its dismemberment by the Treaty of Versailles, its descent into Nazi madness and the near annihilation of the city's Jewish community to which Schoenberg belonged.

The brooding sounds of apprehension and struggle the full orchestra graphically portrayed in the work's early stages gradually gave to a quiet relief, deftly and sensitively interpreted by a few players.

After being rewarded with warm applause, the orchestra left the stage for intermission.

It returned with five brass and four woodwind players, a timpanist and the 40 voices of Gloriam Dei Cantores. They were joined by four soloists in a performance of Mozart's "Requiem."

Both choir and orchestra were led in splendid fashion by Phillippe Entremont, the symphony's

conductor. With his stocky torso and wavy, light gray hair, he also looks the maestro's part.

The "Requiem" is another brooding piece that some orchestras would not consider playing for a small town audience. Mozart kept working on the "Requiem" even as he lay dying, but he did not quite finish it. Commissioned by an anonymous patron, the work could be considered the composer's own funeral oration.

The choir demonstrated that Americans can hold their own with Germans who are the heirs of Mozart, Bach, Beethoven and Brahms.

The choir's website states its purpose is, "To illuminate truth and beauty through choral artistry and to glorify God through a faithful interpretation of two millennia sacred choral music."

Those who braved a light rain to hear their rendition of the "Requiem" learned that is no idle boast.

The male soloists sang well, but sopranos Julie Cherrier and Valentina Fleer get some special praise from a music lover who is partial to female voices.

Just as the trumpets led the instruments, Cherrier and Fleer stood out among the singers. Their harmonizing duets seemed to magically multiply their voices. I had to glance at the chorus to verify no one else sang during their duets. Together they were far greater than the sum of their parts.

For me, at least, the orchestra and chorus again proved that music, especially Mozart's, reveals a reality that resides beyond the material world.

Recently, ECU played host to Richard Dawkins, perhaps the most famous atheist in the English-speaking world. Wednesday night's concert was an appropriate counter point.

I defy any scientist or philosopher to refute this proposition: "If there were no God, there would be no Mozart, no Bach and no Beethoven. There is Mozart, Bach and Beethoven. Therefore, God and eternal life are real."

## Provincial Munich orchestra and Entremont's uninspired leadership get Kravis classical season off to weak start

By Lawrence Budmen



Phillippe Entremont and the Munich Symphony Orchestra opened the Kravis Center's Regional Arts series Tuesday night in West Palm Beach with music of Mozart and Schoenberg.

The Munich Symphony Orchestra opened the Regional Arts Concert Series at the Kravis Center in West Palm Beach on Tuesday night with a double bill of Mozart's final, unfinished masterpiece and the first major work of Arnold Schoenberg. Kravis favorite Philippe Entremont, the orchestra's laureate conductor, was on the podium.

This Munich ensemble should not be confused with the city's other three excellent orchestras — the Bavarian Radio Symphony, Bavarian State Orchestra and Munich Philharmonic. The Munich Symphony is a third-tier orchestra of less than world class stature. Throughout the concert, persistent intonation problems and inconsistent execution marked orchestral playing that often sounded provincial.

Schoenberg's *Verklarte Nacht* (*Transfigured Night*) was first conceived as a string sextet in 1899. Predating the composer's historic break with tonality, the score is richly chromatic, expanding the heated romantic passion of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*. Based on a poem about a woman's confession to her lover about bearing another man's child and the lover's ultimate acceptance and forgiveness, *Verklarte Nacht* is a heady brew of richly inspired melodic and harmonic invention. Even in Schoenberg's later version for full string orchestra, this score remains an artistic landmark from the twilight of musical romanticism.

From the score's very opening bars, the Munich violins were often ragged, their intonation less than true. While viola and cello solos resounded with warmth and richness of tone, the concertmaster's solo turn was thin and technically insecure. Entremont's fast tempos robbed the score of much of its romantic ardor, confusing speed with passion. His square phrasing often reduced the music's transcendent beauty to banality. Bereft of accumulated intensity, the final catharsis fell flat.

Mozart left his *Requiem* in D minor incomplete at his death. The final artistic product from the tumultuous year of 1791, the score was completed by Mozart's pupil Franz Xavier Sussmayr. Sussmayr orchestrated most of Mozart's existing manuscript, filled in several gaps in the score and apparently composed three of the four concluding movements for which there are no surviving sketches. While others have also produced completed versions of Mozart's final musical will and testament, most notably Benjamin Britten and Boston musicologist Robert Levin, Sussmayr's workmanlike edition is most often performed. Despite the score's dual authorship, the *Requiem* is much more than an incomplete torso. Some of Mozart's most spiritual, deeply moving music shines through its pages.

The Munich orchestra was joined by the superb *Gloriae Dei Cantores*, a forty-one voice choir based in Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Splendidly prepared by director Elizabeth Patterson, the choir produced full-voiced fortissimos that stormed the hall and the heavens but could also scale its sound down to the softest whisper. Benefitting from its compact size and corporate precision, the group brought total clarity to the fugal lines of the Kyrie. The women's voices turned ethereal in the melodic glories of the *Lacrimosa* and the group's mellow, beautifully blended sonorities in the *Hostias* marked the high point of a distinguished vocal performance.

The orchestral ensemble was not always in sync with the chorus. Wayward, thin toned woodwinds at the outset preceded some raucous brass playing, particularly in the score's later pages. While the strings were more secure and played with greater tonal warmth than in the Schoenberg, there was a wild scramble in the violins at the onset of the *Dies irae*.

While the broad outlines of the *Requiem* were delineated, Entremont's uninspired leadership and lackluster direction robbed the music of much of its eloquence. The heavy tread of the *Rex tremendae* and plodding tempo of the fugal *Sanctus* undercut the fine choral singing. In the solo quartet of the *Benedictus*, Entremont's pace was too fast for the noble melody to take wing.

Russian-born soprano Valentina Flear sang in richly colored, lyrical tones with a slight edge in her upper register. French mezzo Julie Cherrier's light, attractive timbre was perfect for Mozart. Flear and Cherrier blended felicitously in duets. Baritone Benjamin Bloomfield's manly sound and strong low tones commanded the *Tuba mirum*, accompanied by a fine solo trombone. Only tenor Eric Barry's effortful vocalism and strained high notes marred a strong solo quartet.