



Carolina Philharmonic Delivers Unusual, Intimate Concert Experience at Weymouth

by William Thomas Walker

November 13, 2009, Southern Pines, NC: Perhaps it was the old saw about the curse of Friday the 13th that led to the most unusual concert experience of this critic. Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) has always been a favorite composer, and I have always envied Prince Nikolaus Esterházy, his patron, for having private concerts served by the composer and his orchestra. My dream came true when the newly formed [Carolina Philharmonic](#) brought an enterprising program to the intimate Georgian ballroom in the Weymouth Center for the Arts, where I sat in a comfy seat by the fireplace at the back of the hall, looking over seven rows, ten folding chairs each and all empty, as the musicians gave it their all. Two others listened from a nearby antique couch.

A choice work by Haydn, his Concerto No. 2 in D, Hob. VII/2 (Op. 101), opened the program. Until the autograph score was found after World War II, the work was believed to have been composed by Anton Kraft (1749-1820), principal cellist of Esterházy's Court Orchestra and a composition student of Haydn. Kraft was the foremost cellist of the day, and the main cello themes reflect his style, while the orchestra score, for strings and pairs of horns and oboes, are clearly in Haydn's. Founder, Artistic Director, and Conductor David Michael Wolff chose to divide the solo role between his two very capable cellists. The opening movement, with more overt display and a dazzling cadenza, was taken by Jian Ding. He played with aplomb and brilliance, with razor sharp attacks, well-focused intonation, and phrasing sensitive to classical style. He has been a cellist in the Fayetteville Symphony Orchestra since 2008. Nathan Leyland, familiar as a cellist in both the Chamber Orchestra of the Triangle and the Mallarmé Chamber Players, gave a stylish and unsentimental performance of the lovely adagio and lively rondo finale. Both players displayed fine, warm tone and both had plenty of technique to spare.

The main problem in the Haydn and the two later works, to a lesser degree, was the very lively acoustic of the ballroom, exacerbated by the lack of a full audience and the dampening effect that would otherwise have been provided by winter clothing. While the volume of sound produced by the players above *mezzo forte* would have done well for the ensemble's usual venues — churches, thus far — it was overwhelming in such a small space.

The orchestra was founded in January 2009, originally as the West Side Chamber Orchestra, and debuted in April in Carnegie Hall's small Weill Recital Hall. Their service area currently runs from Greenville to Fayetteville to Southern Pines. The level of musicianship is very high, and the only suggestion I would venture would be to cultivate the quieter range of the dynamics. A hushed *pianissimo* always bowls me over more than a thundering *forte*.

Conductor Wolff made a reduced score for a meaty scene and aria from Act II, Scene 3, of *Anna Bolena* by Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848). "Piangete voi?...Al doce guidame castel nation" is what Lord Harewood, in *The New Complete Kobbé's Opera Book*, calls "one of the composer's great masterpieces of melodic and dramatic inspiration." In the opera, it is a mad scene involving a chorus. It has terrific and sudden mood swings, shifting between terror and joy. The fine soloist, Korean-born Young Mee Jun, is the conductor's wife, a graduate of the rigorous Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia in Rome and an experienced singer on four continents who is beginning to appear more frequently on American stages. She possesses a fine, warm tone and a well-focused voice that is even across its range up to its sterling highs. She had more than enough vocal heft to cut through an orchestra she may well have wished to have been in a pit below a stage. Wolff led his players through every mercurial shift, ably supporting the singer. The lovely, winning English horn solo was played by Deanne Renshaw.

Players and ballroom were more happily matched in the last work, the richly romantic Serenade for Strings by Piotr Ilych Tchaikovsky (1840-93). This bread-and-butter work was given a plush and warm-hearted performance by musicians who clearly love playing. The rhythms were well sprung, pizzicatos were perfectly turned out, and a fully textured sound was cultivated. The second movement waltz was especially memorable, well worth the drive from Hillsborough through more drizzle than expected. All the Carolina Philharmonic needs is effective marketing to draw in an audience and more work on hushed dynamics. They clearly show a great deal of promise.

[Home](#)

[About Us](#) [Calendar](#) [Reviews](#) [News](#) [Links](#) [Support Us](#) [Search](#)
Copyright © CVNC [Contact CVNC](#) [Web Design by Mandie Manring](#)