

San Bernardino Symphony gets into the swing of spring

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3/14/2017

Audience members at the San Bernardino Symphony Orchestra concert of March 18 should not be alarmed when they see only string players on stage. The orchestra for the concert, titled "Spring String Fling," deliberately chose to present works composed for strings only, featuring music by Bach, Shostakovich, and Tchaikovsky.

"It's not the numbers of players on stage, but the dynamism and the impact," said conductor Frank Fetta in a recent interview. "And the impact of these works is big."

The strings are the heart of an orchestra, Fetta said. "They are the only orchestral section that can make a complete sound by themselves, with all the levels, depth, range and color of a full orchestra. I've done many string-only concerts before, and there are always people who come up to me afterwards and say, 'I didn't miss those other instruments.'"

Tchaikovsky's "Serenade for Strings in C major" is a masterpiece, complete and extensive, according to Fetta. "It explores all the possibilities in its full glory. Nothing is left out. It's called a serenade, but it's really a full symphony, presented in four movements."

Through the use of double-stopping in the violins and violas, the orchestra forms towering chordal structures, according to the press release which notes that the second movement has been considered by some musicologists as the best of all the Russian composer's works.

"This piece completely engages the audience with the full range of sounds," said Fetta.

For the Bach and Shostakovich works, piano soloist Steven Vanhauwaert will join the orchestra.

"Here's another instrument that has the full range of sounds - in fact, it has higher and lower sounds than the strings do," Fetta said. "In a sense, the audience will be getting a full symphony again."

Vanhauwaert, who has won many awards and performed solo recitals around the world, will perform Bach's "Keyboard Concert No. 1 in D minor," a piece for harpsichord, violin I and II, viola and cello, and Shostakovich's "Piano Concert No. 1 in C minor."

"The Shostakovich piece is wild and wonderful," said Fetta. "And it is entertaining."

According to Fetta, Shostakovich took his cue from Bach's keyboard concerti by mimicking Bach's instrumentation in a neo-baroque style. "That's why I paired it with the Bach for this concert," he said.

"And then he added the trumpet, sort of like a form of sardonic interjection, infusing the piece with humor and wit," Fetta said. "Our principal trumpet, David Scott, will be the soloist. He is a really fine trumpet player, and we are very fortunate to have him join this work."

"We believe audiences will love both of these musicians," Fetta added. "Vanhauwaert's mastery of these beautiful compositions is amazing. I have never heard the pieces rendered as sensitively as by this outstanding young musician. We hope this concert will serve to uplift the spirits of all in attendance."

This concert's audience members will be able to "hear" from the composers at the pre-concert "Meet the Composers" event featuring members of the Inland Valley Repertory Theatre Company taking on the roles of Haydn, Mozart and Stravinsky as they talk about the evening's music.

San Bernardino Symphony Orchestra

When: 7:30 p.m. Saturday, March 18; pre-concert presentation at 6:30pm.

Where: California Theatre, 562 W 4th Street, San Bernardino.

Tickets: \$25 - \$60; students and military with ID are \$10

Information: www.sanbernardinosymphony.org; 909-381-5388