

FROM THE DAILY CAMERA (BOULDER, CO)

Frautschi fantastic in guest spot with Boulder Phil

By Kelly Dean Hanson

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Switching to single concert events rather than pairs has not cost the Boulder Philharmonic Orchestra any artistic integrity.

It seems as if the musicians are putting even more effort into their playing this season, if the first two concerts are any indication. Maybe only having one shot is a good thing.

Saturday's second concert of the regular Phil season was part of a big day for the orchestra, which presented a children's concert earlier in the afternoon.

The evening concert featured one of the finest guest artists in recent memory. Violinist Jennifer Frautschi, who can claim a spot alongside the great young female virtuosity of our day, mesmerized the large crowd with her impassioned rendering of Sergei Prokofiev's Second Violin Concerto.

The difficult score, which contains as much gorgeous lyricism as virtuoso pyrotechnics, proved to be a perfect vehicle for Frautschi. Her warmth in the beautiful melody beginning the second movement was as breathtaking as her peroration at the end of the finale. A great soloist brings out the best in an orchestra, and Frautschi did this. As with most 20th-century concertos, the orchestral part is more than a mere accompaniment.

With such an impressive soloist on hand, music director Theodore Kuchar apparently wanted to choose orchestral showpieces to match Frautschi's incredible Prokofiev.

Robert Schumann's "Overture, Scherzo, and Finale," a work quite inferior to his four better-known symphonies, does include some great string writing, particularly in the last movement. Kuchar opened the concert with this piece, which is almost a symphony and therefore somewhat surprising as a curtain-raiser in a concert featuring a large concerto and a symphony known for its length.

Beethoven's Third symphony, the "Eroica," is known as the work that broke the mold and redefined the genre. It is also perhaps the most difficult of the master's nine symphonic works to truly bring off well.

For the most part, Kuchar and the Phil rose to the occasion, although the "military march" section of the finale slowed down too much and the main part of the scherzo movement was not as crisp as it could have been.

The contrasting trio of that movement, however, was the best part of the symphony. The horn trio led by Richard Oldberg brought off the difficult hunting call with apparent ease. The funeral march movement was another fine performance. Kuchar took a slow but steady tempo that did not drag, which is important in this lengthy piece. He also took the repeat in the first movement, which is always welcome, even though the concert did run a bit long.

Length was an issue with the concert. It featured an opening work with three movements, which, as stated above, is questionable when the "Eroica" is the closing symphony.

Before the Schumann, the orchestra played a cute and funny little piece by concertmaster Gregory Walker called "Silence of the Cells," which illustrated graphically why certain electronic devices should not be heard in the concert hall. While it was fun, the concert was already too

large without it, and maybe it should have been scheduled for the shorter opening concert in September.

Nonetheless, the orchestra is playing as well as it ever has, and the soloists continue to delight the Macky crowds. The concert was better-attended than the opener, which is a trend that is encouraging.