

Symphony review: DSSO tackles dueling symphonies

By [Lawrance Bernabo](#), for the News Tribune on Oct 18, 2015 at 6:36 p.m.

For “Final Revelations,” the Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra presented a pair of symphonies on Saturday night at the DECC Symphony Hall and demonstrated conductor Dirk Meyer’s flair for the dramatic with a thrilling performance of Pyotr Il’yich Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 6 (Pathétique).

The other work on the program was Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s Symphony No. 41 (Jupiter). The common denominator for the two pieces was that, like Beethoven, these two great composers saved their best symphony for last. Since both Mozart and Tchaikovsky died relatively young, you can only imagine where each could have taken the symphonic form next.

Mozart’s Jupiter Symphony requires a smaller orchestra than we usually hear, which gave the light opening movement room to breathe. Despite Mozart’s threats to develop each of the lyrical themes in a grander manner, he inevitably just moves on to the next catchy melody. Meyer reveled in the shifts back and forth in tempo and volume. Mozart tends to bring out the playfulness in an orchestra and its conductor.

However, the second movement takes a dark turn, as if the composer were signally to us that playtime was over. The third movement, which is maddeningly short, had the woodwinds trying to wrest away a waltz from the strings, all the while shifting back and forth from grand to delicate.

The final movement constantly shifts in tempo and intensity as well. Meyer was really working with his left hand to coax and guide his musicians. The conclusion of the piece was greeted with polite, but not enthusiastic applause, and it did not occur to me that Meyer was setting us up to blow our socks off after intermission.

The development of Tchaikovsky’s opening theme by the bassoon and double-basses was tantalizing slow and brilliantly effective. Meyer gave the pause before the luscious second theme is unleashed on the audience a palatable weight. But all this was a mere prelude to the dramatic maelstrom that climaxes the first movement.

If there was anything that crystallized the differences between these two symphonies it could be seen in how Meyer used his left hand while conducting. For the Mozart it was open and relaxed, floating on the air; but in the first movement of the Tchaikovsky it was often clenched or splayed open, tension and power emanating from it as Meyer drove the orchestra through the piece.

It was like the music was being created on stage before us.

As much as I loved the Prokofiev Piano Concerto, the thrilling opening movement of the “Pathétique” was the highlight of the season to date. Furthermore, I am convinced that it would not have been as effective if the order of the two symphonies was reversed.

The tremors of that first movement affected the second, where the waltz does not quite sound like a waltz, because it is written in 5/4 not 3/4 time. But it is with the third movement march that the composer plays some serious head games with his audience.

Tchaikovsky excels at using the horns and percussion in this symphony; they are integral to the power of the piece, and he uses them to provide a thrilling climax that recaptures most of the first of the opening movement and tricks the audience into applauding.

TRENDING

1. Recently opened Duluth restaurant blends old and new
2. Driven to succeed for her family
3. Hermantown woman hospitalized after Midway Road crash
4. Judges press attorneys in Last Place Earth appeal
5. Chisholm man charged with kidnap, r of minor

[more](#)

LATEST

- Mondale led the way in vice presidency
21 min ago
- American Cancer Society issues new mammogram guidelines
28 min ago
- Matters of record for Oct. 20, 2015
1 hour ago
- Woman involved in Lake Nebagamon standoff faces sentencing
1 hour ago
- Tuesday's weather for Duluth and the Northland: Much cooler the rest of the we
3 hours ago

[more](#)

This Week's Circulars

The image shows a grid of four circular advertisements. The top-left ad is for Menard, featuring a 'HOVER FOR CIRCULAR' button and a 'GET IN THE' button. The top-right ad is for Cub, featuring a 'HOVER FOR CIRCULAR' button and a 'GET IN THE' button. The bottom-left ad is for slumberland furniture, featuring a 'HOVER FOR CIRCULAR' button and a 'GET IN THE' button. The bottom-right ad is for RadioShack, featuring a 'HOVER FOR CIRCULAR' button and a 'GET IN THE' button.

The only problem is there still is one movement to go, and where Tchaikovsky is most audacious is that after the faux big finish he offers a lament that comes full circle to where we began, with the bassoons and double-basses tolling away the final notes until we were left with silence. In fact, it was the longest silence I can recall hearing following the final notes of a piece before the audience was moved to applaud.

Well played, maestro.

The DSSO returns next month with another Masterworks concert, "Scandinavian Odyssey," on Nov. 14. Violinist Tai Murray will play the Sibelius Violin Concerto and the DSSO Chorus makes its first appearance of the season on "A Nordic Symphony," a smorgasbord of pieces by Nordic artists including Sibelius' "Finlandia."

SPONSORED CONTENT



Why Unchecked Credit Can Hurt the Financial Process of Homebuying

By AgStar Financial Services

Learn how to get a credit score that can get you in a new home.

ADVERTISEMENT

HOT JOBS

jobsH

Sales Account Executive

Lamar Outdoor Advertising has a Sales Account Executive position open based out of ou...

CNA

Avanti Health Systems is accepting applications for CNAs at Middle River Health Care...

Multimedia Sales Consultant

Multimedia Sales Consultants are responsible for se online and print products...

General Maintenance Technician

Raiter Clinic in Cloquet has a FT opening for a technician who will perform mainten...

Office Coordinator

Summit Dental is seeking a motivated and dedicate person to join our growing clinic...

FEATURED EMPLOYER



General Laborers & Heavy Equipment Operate

EMPLOYERS

List a job for as low as \$99.95.

Top Ads

\$ BUYING WAR SOUVENIRS \$ COLLECTO
612-385-8947

OAK LAKE CAMPGROUND & RV SALES. 855
9683 www.oaklakerv.com

Office Space. 4899 Miller Trunk Gordy's 218-4
2525

Concrete Work All types. Garage, slab, sidew
patios, brick & block work. 25 years experien
Free Estimates. 218-481-5131

VIEW ALL TOP ADS >

Classifieds

carsHQ
View :

'07 TOYOTA Camry LE, 4 cyl, 92K, new Cooper
tires, great mileage, \$9000 218-390-7017

'01 Saturn L200, 150K miles, AT, rust-free body,
clean, \$1995. 218-879-7250

'08 TOYOTA Corolla LE, auto, only 80K, 40 mpg,
excel cond., \$6500 218-310-2277 DLR

'97 Dodge Intrepid 115K mi, good body, intr. A/C, ft
power, new tires, \$2600, driv

'00 VW Beetle, only 80K, leather, moonroof, 32 mp
silver, excel cond., no rust, \$3

'09 TOYOTA Camry LE, only 50K, dark red, loadec
36mpg, like new \$9000 218-310-2277

'07 Lexus ES 350, 91K mi, loaded, exc., \$12,900.
218-343-8173

apartmentsH

Top Rentals

1BR Skywalk/downtown/DECC area. \$525 incl util.
218-348-3861 »

HERITAGE APTS Spacious 1 & 2 bdrm apts. HUD