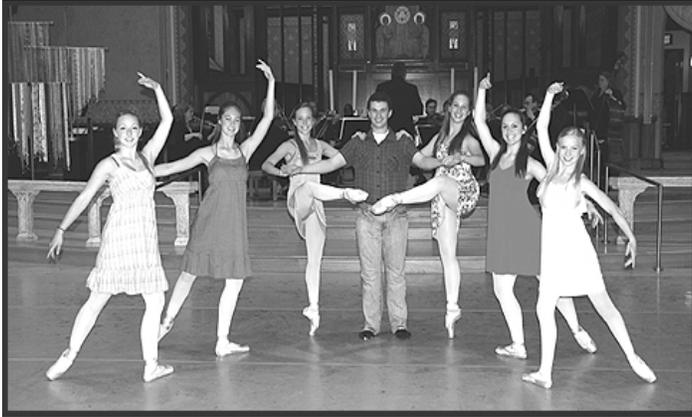


Chamber Ensemble SonoNovo adds depth to Toledo's musical scene

by Lysandra Schmidt - Sylvania Advantage | MID JUNE 2009 COMMUNITY NEWS



Toledo continues to surprise with the depth of the artistic talent inherent in this city.

Never was this more amply illustrated than the recent concert at Trinity Episcopal Church in downtown Toledo when the SonoNovo Chamber Ensemble presented a program of Aaron Copland's music June 5 and June 6.

The concert was more than helped by the wonderful setting of the restored Victorian Gothic Trinity Church, with probably the most perfect acoustics in the area.

Here was a comparatively unknown ensemble, the resident instrumental group of Trinity Church, presenting one of America's great composers in a manner that completely belied the inherent technical difficulties of the music, and yet conveyed the wonderful simplicity of the music line.

Much of Copland's work for his ballet Appalachian Spring was original but in his adaptation of the wonderful Shaker song 'Simple Gifts' and its variations, conductor Wayne F. Anthony and his ensemble completely captured the essence of the American "sound" so idiomatic of Copland's often gentle, jazz style.

The obvious love of their music was reflected and confirmed in the program footnote that stated the musicians, from northwest Ohio and southwest Michigan, were bound together by a love of music, and on Friday night that love certainly shined.

The unobtrusive, yet completely authoritative leadership of conductor Anthony, with no histrionics, gave an air of complete confidence to this reviewer who was able to sit back, relax and completely enjoy the entire program. Mention should be made of Pete Mader (trumpet) and Betsy Bennett-Barth (English horn), and the leader of the ensemble, Cecilia Johnson, whose rapport with Conductor Anthony brought about much of the obvious professionalism SonoNovo so brilliantly displayed.

Significantly the orchestra was similar in size to Copland's original score for 13 instruments and this surely added to the uniqueness and historical accuracy of their performance. The ebullient 'Hoe Down' provided a fitting finale to the program but it was 'Appalachian Spring' that provided the highlight of the evening's program with the Ballet Theatre of Toledo being an integral part of the performance.

Artistic Director Nigel Burgoine's choreography reflected the mood of the music and his young, yet experienced cast, showed why the Company is becoming increasingly in demand among musical groups throughout Ohio.

Few pre-professional ballet companies have as many male dancers as the BTT, reflected in its annual 'Nutcracker', that has become a benchmark to which many companies could well aspire.

This, in itself means we could well see this company, which maintains a strict adherence to classical ballet only, is already reaping the reward of its high aspirations. There is a warmth and a humanity in its productions as well as to every performance with other musical group throughout Ohio. Many of the dancers are Sylvania residents and this was notable from the number of Sylvanians present at this remarkable concert.