

## **Mellow Clash of Titans**

*SB Symphony and Choral Society perform masterpieces by Mozart and Haydn*

*By Daniel Kepl, News-Press correspondent*

*Santa Barbara Symphony conductor Nir Kabaretti has already fashioned an extraordinarily personal watermark on the orchestra's sound palate in his three seasons as Music and Artistic Director. Launching his fourth season officially on Saturday night at the Granada, Mr. Kabaretti's imprimatur was apparent for all to hear: two works of similar vintage but distinctly different character and color.*

*Utilizing principals from within the orchestra for Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante for Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Horn and Orchestra and bringing to the musical table the Santa Barbara Choral Society (JoAnne Wasserman, Director) with a select quartet of superb vocal soloists for Haydn's C Major Mass "In Tempore Belli" (In Time of War) Maestro Kabaretti gave listeners opportunity to savor the subtle differences between these two varietal titans of the Classic period.*

*Interestingly, the Sinfonia Concertante, which has become a staple of the repertoire, surfaced ex post facto around 1886, over one hundred years after it's apparent composition; it's pretty clear Mozart never heard the piece (except in his own head). Likewise, Haydn's C Major Mass was composed in 1796, five years after Mozart's death. The denouement of this labored anecdote is that while both certainly knew each other's output, Mozart never heard "Il Tempore Belle" and Haydn never heard the Sinfonia Conceretante. Both works are genre masterpieces and illustrate the distinct personality differences between the two composers — a fascinating if obscure programming coup by Maestro Kabaretti.*

*The artistic stamp that Mr. Kabaretti has brought to the orchestra during his tenure is silken: the ensemble playing, sectional balances and color are elegant and refined. The orchestra has a cohesive sound these days that is, well, European — perfect for the Mozart/Haydn repertoire. Orchestra personnel as a whole and particularly the principals as illustrated Saturday night, play with a virtuosity and confidence that marks the Santa Barbara Symphony as one of the best in SouthernCalifornia. For those wondering what's the big deal about a guy flapping his hands and keeping time in front of a bunch of already gifted and trained musicians, the answer is as subtle as the question is crude: there is no magic musical stork delivering ensemble cohesion — read this critic's lips, it's the conductor.*

*Symphony woodwind principals — Lara Wickes (oboe) Donald Foster (clarinet) Andy Radford (bassoon, who is also conductor of the Santa Barbara Youth Symphony) and Teag Reaves (horn) — amply demonstrated their virtuosity as well as a collective confidence in their musical Commander In Chief, delivering a more than solid performance of Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante. All three movements — especially the "Adagio" which is as deceptive as quicksand and requires the stamina of a neurosurgeon — were executed by the quartet in stylistically appropriate flourishes; no challenge skirted, blend, tone and ensemble playing at the highest level, color as delicious as a Salzburger Nockerl.*

*Haydn's C Major Mass, for reasons too silly to iterate here dubbed the "kettledrum" mass, found Maestro Kabaretti in operatic mode as suits his training under Zubin Mehta at Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino. In this case, the impetuosity of the brash young Mozart is countered by the cosmopolitan sophisticate, Prince Esterhazy's household muse and favorite of the Imperial court in Vienna. The work, composed while Vienna was under siege by the Napoleonic French is, some say, anti-war in nature.*

*Maestro Kabaretti presided over a seamless realization of the Mass, commanding a beautifully trained Choral Society (thanks, Maestra Wasserman) and superb soloists — Kathryn Lewek, soprano; Susana Poretsky, mezzo; William Ferguson, tenor and Derrick Parker, bass-baritone. Highlights: the tight choral tutti and brisk tempi in the Gloria — lovely balances between chorus and orchestra; the quick segue to a brisk tempo for the "et resurrexit — nice punctuation of text; superb solo quartet blend in the Benedictus and a marvelously controlled and cleanly articulated Agnus Dei.*

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