

Symphony's "Summertime Classics" program creates musical, vocal fireworks

By Melinda Bargreen
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This is not a program for those who wish to doze off peacefully in their theater seats, awakening at intermission to a round of polite applause.

The Seattle Symphony's current "Summertime Classics" program offers one splashy, colorful orchestral piece after another: Rimsky-Korsakov's Suite from "Mlada," Stravinsky's "Firebird" Suite, and finally Carl Orff's orchestral and choral spectacular, "Carmina Burana."

A large and enthusiastic audience roared its approval for the Thursday concert. There was plenty to roar about in these performances under the baton of the orchestra's assistant conductor

Christian Knapp. Since his appointment to that post a year ago, the young maestro has made one favorable impression after another, and Symphony administrators are already talking about extending his stay on the orchestra's conducting staff.

Mobile and expressive, Knapp also is well able to coordinate the imposing forces assembled on the Benaroya stage for the Orff work. His well-chosen program also paired two works with close musical connections: the charming "Mlada" Suite (with Laura DeLuca's remarkable clarinet solo) — and the "Firebird."

"Carmina Burana" is practically indestructible, but it's very hard to get right. The Chorale, prepared by Mary Ann Bisio, acquitted itself well except for a few uneven

entrances; Joseph Crnko's Northwest Boychoir was well-schooled. The three soloists were terrific: Hugh Russell's expressive baritone, and John Osborn's stratospheric, lyrical tenor, both swept up in the drama of the texts.

And Cyndia Sieden, a last-minute replacement for ailing soprano Mary Dunleavy, was nothing short of amazing. At the end, when Sieden's soprano soared upward to coloratura heaven on the word "Dulcissime," there were audible gasps from the audience. A voice like that is a miracle, one that makes you grateful to be in the same room.

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