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### Mozart Players come on after intermission

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For some years now, the Oregon Mozart Players' yearly schedule has included a late-fall concert of Baroque music presented in the resonant, candlelit beauty of First Christian Church in Eugene.

On Saturday evening (earlier in the season than in previous years), Alice Blankenship, leading from the concertmaster's chair, conducted a scaled-down ensemble in an evening of instrumental works and a cantata by J.S. Bach.

Two works by Pietro Locatelli began the all-instrumental portion of the evening. Aside from a couple of imprecise starts, the ensemble delivered the three-movement "Introduzione Teatrale," Opus 4, No. 5, with spirited energy.

Locatelli's genius as a contrapuntalist was in clear evidence in the next piece, his Concerto for String Orchestra and Organ, Opus 1, No. 8, as was the technical fluency of a passel of musicians from the ensemble.

In this work (often called his "Christmas Concerto"), the "concertino" (solo group) consists of five musicians. But with the forces at hand, the "concerto grosso" (bigger group) was barely larger than the concertino, so we heard little contrast in volume between the two groups. Moreover, the level of musical accuracy notwithstanding, melodic lines needed to have more forward motion.

The ensemble brought more drive and dynamism to Antonio Vivaldi's Concerto in F for Three Violins, RV 551, which gave Blankenship, Matthew Fuller and Yvonne Hsueh myriad opportunities for virtuosic display.

In the outer movements, Blankenship and Fuller often played figures in harmony with one another, while Hsueh played contrasting material. Her lyrical, expressive lines dominated the Andante movement, where she was accompanied by Blankenship's muted, bowed arpeggios and by Fuller's pizzicato arpeggios.

The orchestra seemed to have even more spark — and more precision — after intermission. Blankenship and flutist Debra Harris brought mastery and elan to the solo lines in G.F. Handel's infectious ebullient Concerto Grosso in G, Opus 3, No. 3, and the ensemble played with unflagging drive.

The evening's capstone work, Bach's Cantata No. 82, was composed for the Feast of the Purification on Feb. 2, 1727. Baritone Aaron Cain sang with stylistically informed intelligence, delivering the German words with conviction and clarity.

In the opening aria, "Ich habe genug" ("I have enough"), the strings' sighing eighth notes set the mood for Cain's sensitive, well-controlled delivery, and oboist Catherine Lee's wonderfully shaped obbligato lines contributed handsomely.

In the second of the three arias, "Schlummert ein, ihr matten augen" ("Fall asleep, you weary eyes"), Cain conveyed the serenity with which the protagonist looks forward to his release from the burdens of his earthly life.

Despite its minor key, the final aria, "Ich freue mich auf meinen tod" ("I look forward to my death"), exudes a palpable level of joy, and Cain and the orchestral forces expressed that effectively.

As a way of framing the instrumental works, Cain began the evening with something composed well before the Baroque era: a Lied written by the 13th century Minnesinger, Walther von der Vogelweide.

The program was repeated on Sunday afternoon.

Terry McQuilkin, an adjunct instructor of composition at the University of Oregon, reviews classical music for The Register-Guard.

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