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### [Mozart Players serve up lovely music on a cold evening](http://www.registerguard.com/csp/cms/sites/web/news/sevendays/24238818-35/music-piece-strong-blankenship-concert.csp)

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**BY JOHN FARNWORTH**

*For The Register-Guard*

Posted to Web: **Wednesday**, Dec 9, 2009 02:45PM

Appeared in print: **Thursday**, Dec 10, 2009, page D2

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The Oregon Mozart Players celebrated their annual Candlelight Baroque concert Monday in the bright acoustics of First Christian Church in Eugene. The program was to be repeated on Tuesday.

A stripped down orchestra — just six violins, three violas, two cellos, one bass, two flutes, a harp and a harpsichord — made music with enough forte to fill the round, cupola crowned nave. The candles made for an intimate, warm atmosphere on a frigid evening.

Maestro Glen Cortese, as usual, gave a brief, informative introduction to each piece. First up was Ralph Vaughan Williams' Fantasia on "Greensleeves," the folk melody reputed by some to have been composed by Henry VIII, but more likely to have been penned by that mysterious composer Anon.

After a slightly ragged first bar the musicians came together and performed this lovely, haunting short piece very well. Harpist Laura Zaerr almost dominated the other players with her strong, powerful plucking on her magnificent sounding instrument.

J.S. Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 4 in G Major featured soloists Alice Blankenship, violin, and flautists Jill Pauls and Debra Harris. Blankenship was the primary soloist in the first movement. I was struck by her strong, powerful strokes on her apparently oversized violin, which produced a rich almost violalike sound. The two flutes dominated the second movement, Andante, and they played well, although a couple of their embellishments weren't quite as smooth as they might have been.

The third movement saw the "full" orchestra playing its largest role in a typically Bachian fugal finale, with Blankenship delivering dazzling, virtuosic acrobatics on her gorgeously toned instrument — a strong finish to an exquisite concerto.

After intermission we were treated to a delightful sextet of pieces based on Irish folk tunes and orchestrated by harpist Zaerr. She gave an informative introduction to her composition, titled Celtic Concerto; then the orchestra led into the music itself, followed by the solo harp.

There was an interesting and imaginative development of the original theme in this first piece.

The fourth piece, titled “Oro se Jig and Transition,” featured Pauls’ brilliant, edgy piccolo playing and the OMP strings plucking heartily a la pizzicato, a real toe tapper. The last piece “Music in the Glen and Finale” was perhaps the most quintessential Irish jig of all, the harp strong, almost forceful, while the piccolo and flute played coquettishly over the dancing strings. The whole 15-minute piece was fun to listen to and obviously enjoyed by the audience.

The concert concluded with a stellar performance of a Magnificat, attributed for many years to Giovanni Pergolesi, but now correctly assigned to Pergolesi’s teacher, Francesco Durante. The University of Oregon Repetoire Singers supplied the voices for this appealing and melodious choral work. The long, flowing musical lines are graceful and lyrical, and were well sung. The Quia fecit was particularly well executed by soprano Heather Holmquist. And the Suscepit Israel allowed bass Matt Carey and tenor Derek Larson to show us the strength and richness of their instruments.

All in all, it was a graceful, joyful 90 minutes of music, enjoyed by an appreciative, sold-out audience. Well done.

John Farnworth of Vida reviews classical music for The Register-Guard.

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