BSO brings Bach, Brahms, and Berg(?)

By Joel West
Boston Symphony Orchestra, Seiji Ozawa, conductor; John Perlman, soloist; Bach Violin Concerto in E, Berg Violin Concerto, Brahms Symphony No. 4. In concert last Tuesday.

The familiar theme of the opening Allegro of the E major concerto set the stage for what would prove a festive evening. The major fault of the Bach became apparent very early: the violin was the hall itself, whose superb acoustics can rarely be faulted. But the minuscule forces assembled (19 strings, harpsichord, and solo violin) had difficulty making themselves heard in the 2000-seat hall.

Both technically and musically, Perlman and the orchestra gave a sense of hearing, quite simply, the best. In the Allegro, the soloist gave the light, sensitive interpretation that the movement demands; his trills, of course, were par excellence. In the serene Adagio, Perlman's lyric violin was flawed by perhaps his only error of interpretation of the evening: too much vibrato, at least in relation to the style of the early 18th century.

The orchestra delivered a performance of comparable excellence throughout the Bach; in spite of the size of the hall, it was easy to imagine being transported back to an 18th century salon by the strains of the instrumental music of the Middle Ages and after the dominant cadence mid-way through the Allegro non troppo, Ozawa handled difficult technical problems with the greatest ease. But the Fourth was not merely a technical showcase; Ozawa's interpretation of the work was superlative; each movement was shaped to its conclusion: there was a sense of a fine but perceptible thread linking the opening note to the final chords. Such is the craft of a great conductor.

The cellos (clarinet) were given an opportunity by Ozawa, and the orchestra gave a sense of hearing exceptionally well; after all, the 12-tone row on which Edwar Barker (bass) and Harold Wright (violin) had difficulty making themselves heard in the 2000-seat hall.

As usual, the strings performed at the level of excellence that one has come to expect from the BSO. It is hard to imagine a more exposed or difficult to execute passage than a pair of pizzicato string chords played by three-score string players; except for one such passage three-fourths of the way through the first movement, the strings played the chords flawlessly each of the many times it was demanded of them.

Much of the credit belongs to Seiji Ozawa: the pizzicato passages, in the ben marcante string passages of the Allegro vivace, and after the dominant cadence mid-way through the Allegro non troppo, Ozawa handled difficult technical problems with the greatest ease.

The familiar theme of the opening Allegro of the E major concerto set the stage for what would prove a festive evening. The major fault of the Bach became apparent very early: the violin was the hall itself, whose superb acoustics can rarely be faulted. But the minuscule forces assembled (19 strings, harpsichord, and solo violin) had difficulty making themselves heard in the 2000-seat hall.

Both technically and musically, Perlman and the orchestra gave a sense of hearing, quite simply, the best. In the Allegro, the soloist gave the light, sensitive interpretation that the movement demands; his trills, of course, were par excellence. In the serene Adagio, Perlman's lyric violin was flawed by perhaps his only error of interpretation of the evening: too much vibrato, at least in relation to the style of the early 18th century.

The orchestra delivered a performance of comparable excellence throughout the Bach; in spite of the size of the hall, it was easy to imagine being transported back to an 18th century salon by the strains of the instrumental music of the Middle Ages and after the dominant cadence mid-way through the Allegro non troppo, Ozawa handled difficult technical problems with the greatest ease. But the Fourth was not merely a technical showcase; Ozawa's interpretation of the work was superlative; each movement was shaped to its conclusion: there was a sense of a fine but perceptible thread linking the opening note to the final chords. Such is the craft of a great conductor.

The cellos (clarinet) were given an opportunity by Ozawa, and the orchestra gave a sense of hearing exceptionally well; after all, the 12-tone row on which Edwin Barker (bass) and Harold Wright (violin) had difficulty making themselves heard in the 2000-seat hall.

As usual, the strings performed at the level of excellence that one has come to expect from the BSO. It is hard to imagine a more exposed or difficult to execute passage than a pair of pizzicato string chords played by three-score string players; except for one such passage three-fourths of the way through the first movement, the strings played the chords flawlessly each of the many times it was demanded of them.

Much of the credit belongs to Seiji Ozawa: the pizzicato passages, in the ben marcante string passages of the Allegro vivace, and after the dominant cadence mid-way through the Allegro non troppo, Ozawa handled difficult technical problems with the greatest ease. But the Fourth was not merely a technical showcase; Ozawa's interpretation of the work was superlative; each movement was shaped to its conclusion: there was a sense of a fine but perceptible thread linking the opening note to the final chords. Such is the craft of a great conductor.

What would Socrates think of O'Keefe?

If you question long enough and deep enough, certain truths about O'Keefe become evident. It has a hearty, full-bodied flavor. It is smooth and easy going down. It has a good after-taste for what would prove a festive evening. The major fault of the Bach became apparent very early: the violin was the hall itself, whose superb acoustics can rarely be faulted. But the minuscule forces assembled (19 strings, harpsichord, and solo violin) had difficulty making themselves heard in the 2000-seat hall.

Both technically and musically, Perlman and the orchestra gave a sense of hearing, quite simply, the best. In the Allegro, the soloist gave the light, sensitive interpretation that the movement demands; his trills, of course, were par excellence. In the serene Adagio, Perlman's lyric violin was flawed by perhaps his only error of interpretation of the evening: too much vibrato, at least in relation to the style of the early 18th century.

The orchestra delivered a performance of comparable excellence throughout the Bach; in spite of the size of the hall, it was easy to imagine being transported back to an 18th century salon by the strains of the instrumental music of the Middle Ages and after the dominant cadence mid-way through the Allegro non troppo, Ozawa handled difficult technical problems with the greatest ease. But the Fourth was not merely a technical showcase; Ozawa's interpretation of the work was superlative; each movement was shaped to its conclusion: there was a sense of a fine but perceptible thread linking the opening note to the final chords. Such is the craft of a great conductor.

The cellos (clarinet) were given an opportunity by Ozawa, and the orchestra gave a sense of hearing exceptionally well; after all, the 12-tone row on which Edwin Barker (bass) and Harold Wright (violin) had difficulty making themselves heard in the 2000-seat hall.

As usual, the strings performed at the level of excellence that one has come to expect from the BSO. It is hard to imagine a more exposed or difficult to execute passage than a pair of pizzicato string chords played by three-score string players; except for one such passage three-fourths of the way through the first movement, the strings played the chords flawlessly each of the many times it was demanded of them.

Much of the credit belongs to Seiji Ozawa: the pizzicato passages, in the ben marcante string passages of the Allegro vivace, and after the dominant cadence mid-way through the Allegro non troppo, Ozawa handled difficult technical problems with the greatest ease. But the Fourth was not merely a technical showcase; Ozawa's interpretation of the work was superlative; each movement was shaped to its conclusion: there was a sense of a fine but perceptible thread linking the opening note to the final chords. Such is the craft of a great conductor.

The cellos (clarinet) were given an opportunity by Ozawa, and the orchestra gave a sense of hearing exceptionally well; after all, the 12-tone row on which Edwin Barker (bass) and Harold Wright (violin) had difficulty making themselves heard in the 2000-seat hall.

As usual, the strings performed at the level of excellence that one has come to expect from the BSO. It is hard to imagine a more exposed or difficult to execute passage than a pair of pizzicato string chords played by three-score string players; except for one such passage three-fourths of the way through the first movement, the strings played the chords flawlessly each of the many times it was demanded of them.

Much of the credit belongs to Seiji Ozawa: the pizzicato passages, in the ben marcante string passages of the Allegro vivace, and after the dominant cadence mid-way through the Allegro non troppo, Ozawa handled difficult technical problems with the greatest ease. But the Fourth was not merely a technical showcase; Ozawa's interpretation of the work was superlative; each movement was shaped to its conclusion: there was a sense of a fine but perceptible thread linking the opening note to the final chords. Such is the craft of a great conductor.