Tennstedt's Naechtmusik magnifique

Boston Symphony Orchestra, Harold Wright, clarinet, Klaus Tennstedt, conductor. Mozart's Eine kleine Nachtmusik, Clarinet Concerto in A; Richard Strauss' Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme. In concert last Tuesday.

By Joel West

Along with principal guest conductor Colin Davis, Klaus Tennstedt towers over the Boston Symphony; Tennstedt shares not only his authority, but his musical stature as well. While Davis is best known for his Berlioz, Tennstedt's force appears to be the most and potocies of the Germanic musical literature.

In response to his cajoling, the string players of the BSO opened the program with a crisp rendition of the well-known Eine kleine Nachtmusik. The opening Allegro was left light and unfetterred, while the marcato of the Andante was well executed by the first violins. Each restate- ment of the main theme in the latter movement was a perfect repeat, while the dynamics and tempo within movements were varied with rare sensitivity and sub- tlety. In tackling the Nachtmusik, Ten- stedt delivered a serenade of polite 18th century society, one that charmed the audience rather than overpowering it. Unlike other notable German conductors, Tennstedt's Mozart was free of 19th cen- tury Romantic notions of what the Viennese master should sound like.

Such was even more the case with the Clarinet Concerto. Mozart's last complete major work. Here, however, Tennstedt's presence was overshadowed by the diminutive Harold Wright. Flirt glissandi and effortless skips between the three registers of the clarinet marked the opening Allegro. In D, as was Adagio he deftly exe- cuted a violent trill, while the final Rondò: Allegro brought a more sprightly performance. Wright's captivating efforts were matched by Tennstedt and the orchestral ensemble. As in the previous work, the key appeared to be good articulation by the str- ings. Tennstedt was particularly inspired in the second movement, when he impeccably fuded in the strings after a Wright solo. In fact, the only criticism of the conduc- tor for either piece was the balance of Nachtmusik, with five violas employed where seven would have been more ap- propriate.

Strauss' 1917 Orchestral Suite from Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme is an unfamiliar work that contains at least two familiar Straussian attributes: strong programmatic associations, and imaginative orchestral coloring. As an example of the latter, the brass consists of two horns, one trumpet and one trombone.

Trumpet principal Armando Ghiailla distinguished himself in solos in the first and third movements; similarly, pianist Tatiana Yampolsky was essential to the opening movement. Principal bassist Edwin Barker also played an important role in the piece.

The real accolades belonged to concert- master Joseph Silverstein, cellist Jules Eskin, and oboist Ralph Gomberg, who were employed constantly by Strauss' orchestration. Silverstein's best moment was an impressive polonaise in the fourth movement, though he continued his solo through the remainder of the piece. Gomberg's first solo came with the pastoral upward melody of the first move- ment; the oboe principal was kept busy throughout the suite. However, it was Eskin's playing that consistently shone through the rich orchestral texture. His warm and vibrant instrument made the fifth movement, based on the Lully minuet, while in the final (ninth) movement, Eskin lived up to the responsibility placed on his shoulders by the composer.

Tennstedt showed himself as talented with the Strauss as he was with the Mozart; this week he will try his hand at Haydn and Prokofiev. Incidentally, for BSO fans who haven't heard yet, the concerts of March 16-22 have been cancelled, while the March 14 Open Rehearsal has been replaced by a March 29 Open Rehearsal featuring Schonberg's Gurre-Lieder. Meanwhile, the BSO will become the first U.S. orchestra to visit China in 30 years, thanks to financ- ing from the people who bring you Coke.

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