BSO gives a strong performance in opening weekend

By Har Koen and Lukas Weber

The Boston Symphony Orchestra, conducted by award-winning director Seiji Ozawa, opened its 114th season last Thursday with a performance of popular pieces from contemporary American composers, commemorating the 50th anniversary of World War II. Those included pieces from Bernstein, Copland, Barber, and "Remembrance" from Schifrin's List by Williams.

Last Saturday evening the BSO's next program in the series began with Penderecki's Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima (Tremfaroar Hiroshma). The Threnody was composed in 1960 and dedicated to the victims of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima 15 years earlier. Initially a study in discordant sound, or in so-called white and colored noise, the piece is a revolution in "classical" music that shows a powerful modernist trend. The bizarre instrumental noises then combine with familiar imitations of sounds associated with war, such as the white of warplane propellers and cry of the sirens. The discord and peculiar timing, by seconds, makes the piece not meant to be emotionally sophisticated, it was intense and difficult to play due to its quick tempo. Ursula Oppens was rewarded by the audience's response for such an intense and difficult to play due to its quick tempo. Ursula Oppens was rewarded by the audience's applause at the end of the piece.

The last piece was definitely the program's best: Brahms' Symphony No. 1 in E minor, Opus 68. It is important to note that Brahms did not consider composing a symphony for a long time, especially since he feared his symphony might not match the masterpieces of Mozart and Beethoven. Once he was confident enough to publish his first symphony, which took him almost 20 years to complete, his other three symphonies followed in relatively quick succession. The fourth one, composed in two years, perfectly reflects the emotional mood of its creator as well as the still apparent influences that Beethoven's music had on Brahms. The vivid, harmonic tunes by the strings dominated almost the entire piece, accompanied, from time to time, by the powerful timpani. The overall effect was fabulous, taking the audience up to an emotional climax in the finale, an effect only the distinguished composers can achieve. The grand ovation at the end was the audience's response for such an outstanding performance by the orchestra.

The Boston Symphony Orchestra's repertoire for this fall will include famous pieces of world renowned contemporary composers, namely Prokofiev, Rachmaninoff, Shostakovich, and Sessions. The BSO will also be performing different programs serving to every music lover's taste, from Haydn to Kodaly, from Rossini to Ravel, and a performance dedicated to chamber music.

The BSO will include individual appearances of celebrated performers, such as the pianists Andre Watts and Ursula Oppens, the mezzo-soprano Susan Graham, and the soprano Utte Lemper, to name just a few. What's more, the Boston Pops Orchestra with the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra and the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, conducted by John Oliver, will start its holiday season in mid-December. Also worth noting is the New Year's Eve Gala, presented by the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra on Dec. 31.

The great variety of offerings by the Boston orchestras definitely promises to satisfy any taste in classical music throughout this 1994-95 season. It is a good idea, however, to reserve the tickets now for upcoming performances.

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