

Mass Effort by Handel Society

Mozart's *Great Mass in C minor* comprised the Handel Society's May 17th and 18th performances at Dartmouth's Hopkins Center. Robert Duff, the Society's estimable artistic director and conductor, led the chorus, orchestra and soloists in a compelling traversal of this long, challenging, rewarding work, one that certainly belongs in the same company as Bach's *B minor Mass*.

Like his *Requiem*, Mozart (1756-1791) did not complete the *C minor Mass*, leaving it half finished, with only the *Kyrie*, *Gloria* and *Sanctus* composed. Why it was set aside is unknown, as is the motivation for his starting it in the first place, although there has been much speculation. Over the years several musicians have come up with completions of the mass. The one used by the Handel Society is by Robert Levin, the distinguished pianist, Mozart scholar and Harvard faculty member. In its unfinished state, the Mass took close to an hour. In the Levin version, it is a bit more than one and a half hours.

The *C minor Mass* is composed in cantata style, with the text broken down into small movements alternating between soloists and chorus. Soloists were sopranos Janinah Burnett and Julia Steinbok, tenor Dann Coakwell and baritone David McFerrin. Concertmaster of the excellent orchestra was Elizabeth Young. Mention should also be made of the outstanding work of principal oboist Margaret Herlehy.

Because of the length of the mass, space does not allow for detailed comment on all aspects of the performance. With the space available, let me address the work of the soloists, chorus and orchestra.

The opening *Kyrie* establishes the seriousness and spirituality of the Mass and the chorus and Ms. Steinbok conveyed this convincingly. Steinbok has a strong, limpid, radiant voice and used it to great advantage throughout the performance. As we have come to expect, the chorus, under the knowing direction of Robert Duff, sang wonderfully well throughout, with clarity, balance, spot-on intonation, textual articulation and total commitment. Very impressive indeed.

Soprano Janinah Burnett has a stunning voice of great flexibility and amazing range. A good deal of her solos reflected Mozart's operatic writing and involved some coloratura

pyrotechnics, which she handled with aplomb. Occasionally, at the top of her range, stridency was detected, but on the whole this was wholly admirable singing.

Dann Coakwell is a highly acclaimed tenor, especially well known for his performance of Bach, Handel and other composers of that period. His is not a big voice, but one of flexibility and sensitivity. At this performance, his voice did not project well at all and it was difficult to hear him. Part of this could be attributed to the auditorium, which is not kind to vocal soloists, unless one is seated in the front center section of the hall.

Baritone David McFadden did not sing until almost the end of the performance and then as part of a vocal quartet with the three other soloists. What little he did sing displayed a fine

instrument with pleasing tone quality. It would be rewarding to hear him at greater length.

The orchestra for the Mass was first rate, as is always the case in the instrumental ensembles Duff brings together for Handel Society performances. It provided outstanding support for the soloists' parts, as well as for the chorus.

And then there is Robert Duff, who was the real star of the concert. To bring off such a fine performance of a truly formidable work like the Mozart *Great Mass in C minor* with an amateur chorus of 100, plus orchestra and soloists, is extraordinary. How fortunate for the Handel Society, as well as the community, to have this gifted man at the helm.

—William Dollard

who cooks for you?

Basil Mates with Chicken

Basil the herb, that is. God help us if that were not the case. One of the pleasures of summer is the abundance of fresh herbs available to us, either at farm markets, the local grocery or from your herb garden.

Basil is a favorite herb of mine and is the basis for Pesto, a cold sauce consisting of large amounts of basil plus olive oil, Parmesan cheese, pine nuts, garlic, freshly ground black pepper and salt to taste. The sauce, poured over hot pasta, is one of the joys of summer, or for that matter, any season, provided you always have fresh basil available.

Recently I had an esteemed friend to lunch and the day before had purchased a large bunch of fresh basil from a local shop specializing in fruit and vegetables. I had some chicken breasts on hand and decided a chicken salad would be fitting for a warm, sunny day, a rarity of late.

With the ingredients at hand, I came up with a basil chicken salad. It turned out well and was enthusiastically received. Tossed greens and cherry tomatoes with a simple oil/lemon dressing accompanied it. For dessert, fresh raspberries with a Grand Marnier whipped cream.

Basil Chicken Salad

2 cups cooked chicken breasts, cut into ½ inch cubes 1 tablespoon good quality olive oil

2/3 cup mayonnaise or 1/3 cup mayonnaise and 1/3 cup low fat sour cream

1 & ½ cups fresh basil leaves, tightly packed. 2 tablespoons pine nuts
salt and pepper to taste

Place mayonnaise and basil in the bowl of a food processor or blender and process until well combined. Place chicken in a mixing bowl, add the basil mixture and gently mix thoroughly. Place in a serving dish; a gratin does nicely. Sprinkle pine nuts over the top.

An Austrian (no, not Australian) Gruner Veltliner, a Vigonier or a dry Riesling would go well with the salad, as would a Vouvray a bit on the dry side.

—Bill Dollard