



Join TwinCities.com Online: Register Sign in

Site Web Search powered by YAHOO! SEARCH

Home News Local Sports Business Entertainment Life & Culture Travel Help Obituaries Jobs Cars Homes & Rentals Classifieds Shopping Pets Music

McGegan's swan song a fine tribute to SPCO

By David Hawley
Special to the Pioneer Press
Updated: 04/04/2009 12:38:14 AM CDT

So long, Nick!

Nicholas McGegan, whose unmitigated joy for music has caused local reviewers to overuse the word "ebullient," ends more than two decades of formal tenures with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra with tonight's concert at the Ordway Center.

Fittingly, he's going out with fireworks — the ones set off by Handel.

Twenty years seem to have flown by for those who remember when the diminutive conductor signed on to head the SPCO's old, hugely popular Baroque Series in the late 1980s. He was also one of the first artistic partners when the orchestra's new collective-oriented system was created and it's this position that ends tonight in what surely will be an emotionally charged evening.

He'll be back, of course, though not as regularly. The SPCO has cords that bind.

Tonight's farewell program received its first performance Friday at Wayzata Community Church. As might be expected, it's heavy on Handel, the composer often associated with McGegan's reputation as an interpreter of "historically informed" Baroque music. In addition to the lively and familiar "Music for the Royal Fireworks," the program included the fifth concerto grosso from Handel's Opus 6 collection and Elgar's virtuosic take on the concerto grosso form — the Introduction and Allegro for Strings.

As a nice mood-changer, the program also included a work by one of McGegan's friends: Peter Maxwell Davies' "A Spell for Green Corn — the MacDonald Dances," featuring

principal second violinist Dale Barltrop as soloist. On the whole, the concert amounted to McGegan's tribute to the orchestra, with music that displayed its musical depth — bright tempos, biting attacks, crisp and jaunty, transparent, elegant, grounded and spirited all at once. A heck of a goodbye concert.

For me, the Davies work provided the most pleasure. Like much of the composer's music, it's flamboyant and enticing — and in this case, playful, with a sweet Scottish undertow.

Barltrop gave it a wonderfully melodic performance Friday, along with a physical animation almost as wriggly as McGegan's podium jig. The orchestral color in the middle section was vivid, and Barltrop's slightly bent, slippery double-stop melodic line was almost throaty in its sweetness.

The second half started with a tribute to the strings — a mighty surprisingly muscular performance of the Elgar — followed by fireworks music on the order of a fusillade. McGegan, looking almost placid, sought tempos

bordering on the frantic but performed with a sense of an inexorable tide, ebbing and flowing and joyous. McGegan deserves his reputation as a Handel interpreter, always able to discover something surprising and delightful in all that familiarity.

Come back soon. Always welcome.

What: Nicholas McGegan's farewell performance with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra

When: 8 p.m. today, Ordway Center for the Performing Arts

Tickets: \$59-\$11 at www.thespc.org or 651-291-1144

Capsule: A heck of a goodbye concert.

MORE ENTERTAINMENT HEADLINES

St. Paul Chamber Orchestra musicians take 12 percent pay cut

Australian library finds copy of Schindler's list

Celebrity birthdays

Summer-style flick gets off to a fast and furious start

Survival could be difficult for

'Rescue Me' All fired up for an extra-long run that returns Tuesday

MUSIC

Advertisement

Ads by Adblade



'Do Teeth Whiteners Work?'
We reviewed them all and found the ones that work! Find the best ways to whiten your teeth today! [Learn more](#)



Colon Cleansers
Warning! Don't try colon cleanser until you read this shocking report. [Learn more](#)

Related Stories

Ads by Adblade

'Do Teeth Whiteners Work?'
We reviewed them all and found the ones that work! Find the best ways to whiten your teeth today! [Learn more](#)

Cruise Prices Slashed!
Cruise prices are so low right now. Up to 75% off! [Learn more](#)

HP Officejet Pro
Up to 50% less color cost per page than laser.

Now save up to **\$50** ONLY UNTIL MAY 2, 2009

SHOP NOW >>

PIONEER Top Listings

Jobs

Registered Nuclear Medicine Technology
Shared Medical Technology, Inc.

Social Services - Counselor Positions
Confidential

Mechanical Design
Marnor Storage Tech Inc

Business Agent
Law Enforcement Labor Services Inc.

Spanish Immersion Teachers
Lakes International Language Academy

Customer Service/Sales
Confidential

HEALTHCARE MED...
Click for Details

RDA
Roseville Dentistry