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GORGEOUS ALL-ROMANTIC PROGRAM AT SUNDAY'S BEETHOVEN FESTIVAL CONCERT

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BEETHOVEN FESTIVAL PARK CITY AUTUMN CLASSICS, Temple Har Shalom, Park City, Oct. 6

Ludwig van Beethoven wrote 10 violin sonatas that are staples of the repertoire. One of the most charming in this collection is the *Spring* Sonata in F major, op. 24. This piece opened the Beethoven Festival Park City's Autumn Classics series Sunday, part of a gorgeous all-romantic program.



Airi Yoshioka

The *Spring* is one of Beethoven's sunniest, brightest works. The two performing it Sunday, violinist Airi Yoshioka and pianist John Novacek, captured the infectious optimism of the music with their lyrical and expressive reading. They played with crisp, clean lines and articulation. Their delivery was spot on and everything one could hope for in this piece. It was as if it had been written for them.

After the Beethoven, Yoshioka returned with violinist Monte Belknap, violist Leslie Harlow and cellist Cheung Chau, for a magnificent perusal of Robert Schumann's Quartet in A major, op. 41, no. 3. Schumann wrote only three string quartets, all published as op. 41, and the third in this set is without question one of his most effusively expressive and stunningly romantic works.

The four captured the wonderfully expressed feelings in this piece with their sensitive reading that focused on capturing the minutest nuances. Their playing was finely shaded and brought the rich harmonic language to life. Their tempos were well chosen and their full, rounded string sound matched perfectly. It was a flawless approach to the work that brought out the romantic sensibilities without overdoing it.

Closing the concert was Ernst von Dohnányi's Sextet, scored for violin, viola, cello, clarinet, horn and piano. Dohnányi was an unapologetic romantic and the Sextet, from 1935, is an intoxicatingly lush work that could easily have been written in the late 19th century.

And that was how it was treated by the ensemble. For this performance Yoshioka, Leslie Harlow, Chau and Novacek were joined by clarinetist Russell Harlow and horn player Laurence Lowe, a colleague of Belknap's at Brigham Young University. They emphasized the luxuriant writing with their impassioned and at times dramatic playing that was infused with wonderfully shaded nuances and beautifully molded phrases. Dohnányi wears his emotions on his sleeve in the Sextet, and the players



made the most of it without letting their interpretation become mawkish. It was a well conceived and thoughtful reading.

John Novacek (Photo: Courtesy
Parker Artists)

The festival concludes next weekend with a salon concert on Oct. 12 at the Harlow's residence and a matinee concert on Oct. 13 in Temple Har Shalom. For information log on to www.beethovenfestivalparkcity.org.



About Edward Reichel

Edward Reichel, author, writer and composer, has been covering the classical music scene in Utah since 1997. For many years he served as the primary music critic for the Deseret News. He has also written for a number of publications, including Chamber Music Magazine, OPERA Magazine, 15 Bytes and Park City Magazine, and he is currently a regular contributor to saltlakemagazine.com. He holds a Ph.D. in composition from the University of California at Santa Barbara. He can be reached at ereichel@reichelartsreview.com. Reichel Recommends is also on Twitter @ReichelArts.

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