

## Orchestra, chorus, organ union masterful

BY CHARLES WEBB  
For The Republic

**C**ONCERT-GOERS at First Christian Church on Nov. 16 were treated to three rarely heard masterworks of the early 20th and 21st centuries performed brilliantly by the Columbus Indiana Philharmonic, the Philharmonic chorus and organist Dan McKinley under the superb direction of their regular conductor, David Bowden.

We heard first "Lux Aeterna", a cantata by contemporary composer Morten Lauridsen, composed in 1997 for the Los Angeles Master Chorale. Written in five sections, each one pertaining to an aspect of

light, the work draws musical inspiration from requiems of Duruflé and Faure, embracing tonality throughout with sinuous melodic lines and haunting harmonies.

The text is taken from sections of the traditional Latin Mass and was clearly enunciated by the chorus throughout the entire score. The first movement, Introitus, sets the tone of the entire work emphasizing an emotional, deep feeling for the religious words.

Without interruption the second movement, In Te, Domine, Speravi, introduces more experimental harmonic structures, while the third, O Nata Lux, implores Jesus to "accept the praises and prayers of your supplicants."

Section four shows the orchestra and chorus in perfect balance; and the last, Agnus Dei, returns to a harmonic palate much like the opening movement. Maestro Bowden drew hushed pianissimos and thundering double fortes from his attentive and disciplined forces.

Richard Strauss represents late romantic music composition at its most fully developed. His "Festive Prelude for Organ and Orchestra" was commissioned for the opening of a new concert hall in Vienna.

Although it required 150 performers for its world premiere, the Columbus forces utilized a reduced orchestration written especially for this

occasion by Dan Powers, who scored a superb edition without sacrificing the grandeur and brilliance of the original. Opening chords of the magnificent Aeolian-Skinner pipe organ give way to fanfare-like splashes of color from the stentorian brass.

Then we hear the organ and orchestra in thrilling passages that modulate from one key to another. Phrases reminiscent of Strauss' great tone poems punctuate the stately themes of this truly celebratory work. McKinley added the grandeur of the organ to the majestic conclusion of this colossal piece.

The concert concluded with a powerful presentation of Charles Marie Widor's

Symphony for Organ and Orchestra, Op. 42, a work thought lost to the world for more than 70 years.

The score and parts resurfaced in the 1990s, and Friday's audience was treated to a stunning performance.

McKinley showed his masterful technical skill and command of the large instrument. His feat was all the more remarkable because of the failure of the combination piston system, depriving him of immediate stop combination changes. Skillful work by two assistants, John Simpson and Ray Hass acting as stop changers, enabled McKinley to negotiate the difficult first movement, ranging from florid passages of a solo flute

stop to the brilliance of full organ in seamless fashion.

The second movement showcased the shimmering and resonant sound of the orchestral string section, and the finale brought the full powers of the organ and orchestra to a grand close — all guided by the marvelous insight and execution of Bowden.

This entire concert was performed at a level one would expect from the most experienced symphony orchestras, choruses and soloists anywhere in the world. Columbus can be enormously proud of such accomplishment.

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