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## Bobby McFerrin and the BSO

Bobby McFerrin, best known for creating the hit song "Don't Worry, Be Happy," brought his conducting skills as well as his vocal talents to the Music Center at Strathmore on Friday evening, leading the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in finely detailed performances of works by Mozart.

Swishing his baton like an artist splashing paint onto a canvas, McFerrin joyfully conducted two symphonies from memory. The BSO, transformed into a small-size chamber orchestra, responded with a cheerful sound in Symphony No. 7a in G, K. 45a ("Old Lambach").

McFerrin's directing took on a commanding air in the exciting "Prague" Symphony No. 38 in D, K. 504, prompting the BSO's glossy winds and limber strings to alternately tiptoe and roar their way through the movements.

Soloist Christopher O'Riley's elegant touch at the keyboard in Piano Concerto No. 22 in E-flat, K. 482, yielded silky runs and an overall gauzy texture that luminesced above the orchestra's bright sounds. But his tendency to clear his pedals too intermittently throughout the concerto meant that the distinction of individual notes, especially during faster passages, was often lost in the hall.

The pianist helped McFerrin transition the audience from Mozart to modern sounds for an entertaining half-hour of inventive and comic vocal improvisations. McFerrin thumped his chest, tapped his feet and vocalized music that sounded like a cross between a jazz ensemble and an a cappella group. His hilarious whirlwind revue of "The Wizard of Oz" was the concert's biggest crowd-pleaser.

## EdgeEnsemble

George Crumb, one of the most interesting composers of the 20th century, had four works thoroughly explored by the EdgeEnsemble Friday night in George Mason University's Harris Theatre. He is also one of the most interesting composers of the 21st century, still producing new works at age 75.

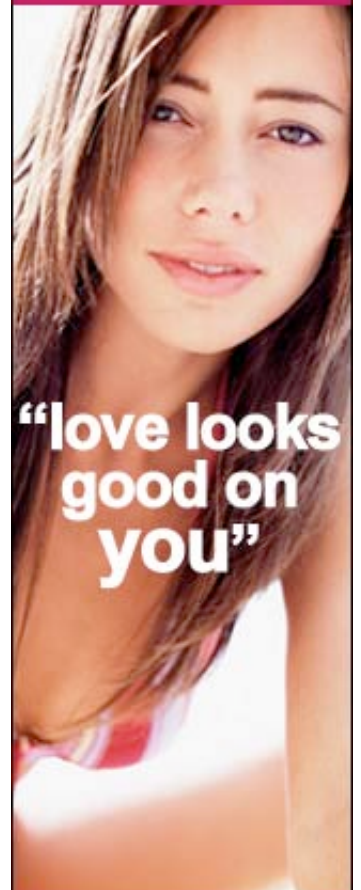
The program, presented by the university's music department, also included a collaborative work from two faculty members: Steve Antosca, composer and co-founder of the ensemble, and Paras Kaul. While violinist Lina Bahn and cellist Ignacio Alcover played the music of Antosca's "for two," Kaul sat at a computer, wearing a headband studded with electrodes.

Her brain waves were projected into the computer, which used them to control a vivid image projected on a large screen. The image was of a flower, set against a turbulent background, something like a seascape. As the brain waves fluctuated, the image moved around the screen, changing shape and color, sometimes red, resembling a rose, other times white, like a lily.

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Crumb is a highly evocative composer, though his images are seldom as well defined as those in "for two." He deals in hints, fragments and nuances -- trusting the audience to fill in the complete picture -- in "Four Nocturnes," "Mundus Canis (A Dog's World)," "Eleven Echoes of Autumn" and "Vox Balaenae (The Voice of the Whale)". All were sensitively performed. Making a particularly strong impact was "Mundus Canis," which used guitar and percussion to sketch the vivid personalities of five dogs who've lived with the Crumb family.

-- **Joseph McLellan**

### **Kirov Orchestra**

An evening of Russian romanticism was nearing its end at the George Mason University Center for the Arts on Saturday, all gorgeous colors, high energy and exquisite virtuosity. But there was the Mussorgsky "Pictures at an Exhibition" yet to go, all 14 movements of this overplayed crowd-pleaser, and it was hard not to sigh a little and wonder why Valery Gergiev and his Kirov Orchestra would pile this on top of the Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev and Rimsky-Korsakov. What more could these performers say about 19th-century Russian music or about themselves?

Plenty, it turns out. This was an astonishing reading of a score whose vastness and voluptuousness are generally considered to be its substance. Without ever sounding premeditated or contrived and without ever compromising either the sense of vastness or the momentum of the music, Gergiev molded every voice and every sonority. Bass tones were taken over seamlessly by the trombones. Oboes were allowed to make nasty noises where it suited the music, and some oboe-flute duetting was intentionally just enough out of tune for acoustical beats to batter the eardrum. Gergiev used silence as powerfully as he used orchestral explosions, and his dramatic timing was uncanny. This is the kind of musicmaking one expects from the intimacy of the finest lieder singing, never from a symphony orchestra in full bloom. What a pleasure to realize that, in the right hands, even this piece can sound new.

Earlier in the evening, Yefim Bronfman had joined the orchestra for a briskly articulated, cheerful and incisive reading of the Prokofiev Piano Concerto No. 1, which laid out, with pleasant, non-didactic clarity, this large single movement's architecture. Bronfman never tried to play over the orchestra, and Gergiev was sensitive to the balances Prokofiev had in mind so that the piano was allowed to move through the ensemble naturally. It never sounded as if anyone but Prokofiev was making it happen.

This is a remarkable orchestra -- remarkable for the varieties of color its sections can produce, for its technical brilliance and discipline, and for its energy. Above all, it is remarkable for the musical and dramatic imagination of its conductor, who, with rather unconventional conducting techniques, absolutely gets his way.

-- **Joan Reinthaler**

### **Lang Lang**

Pianist Lang Lang gave an amazing recital Saturday afternoon at the Kennedy Center Concert Hall. His performance -- as poetic and expressive as it was virtuosic and flawless -- brought the Washington Performing Arts Society's "Stars Series" season to a triumphant conclusion.

From the simple melodies of Mozart's Piano Sonata in C, K. 330, to the complex sonorities of Liszt's "Petrarch Sonnet" No. 104 from "Annees de Pelerinage," the 22-year-old sounded every note with

meticulous clarity. Blurry pedals, like finger slips, were embargoed from the hall.

Lang Lang's hands caressed the instrument lovingly, even while coasting up and down the keyboard at exhilarating velocities in Chopin's Piano Sonata No. 3 in B Minor, Op. 58. While the young pianist's fleetness was impressive, it was his emotional dive into the sonata's Largo, with its beautifully subdued lines, that moved listeners most.

Lang Lang could have unleashed raucous power and brassy flourishes in Rachmaninoff's Prelude No. 5 in G Minor, Op. 23, but he remained faithful to the composer's musical notations, producing soft vamps, tastefully accented chords and an especially dreamy middle section. He breezed through Prelude No. 2 in B-flat just as reverently.

If there was anything less than brilliant on the program, it was Schumann's "Kinderszenen," Op. 15. Lang Lang's sophisticated approach to this work enhanced the introspective qualities of its 13 pieces, particularly in the reflective "Traumerei." But oddly enough, its performance needed more of the youthful playfulness that the pianist wittily displayed in Liszt's "Hungarian Rhapsody" No. 2 in C-sharp Minor.

-- **Grace Jean**

### **Prince George's Philharmonic**

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is a celebration of creativity, of joy and of human brotherhood; above all, perhaps, it is a celebration of freedom, being the work that first, with elaborately focused energy, freed the symphonic form from wordlessness.

All the work's qualities could be heard Saturday in a performance by the Prince George's Philharmonic under Charles Ellis at the University of Maryland's Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center. It was also a celebration of community.

The orchestra was joined by three choruses: the Chesapeake Chorale, Heritage Signature Chorale and High Point High School Concert Choir. They sang together as a tightly integrated and intensively trained unit. The sections were well balanced, the ensemble precise, the diction clear and powerful.

There were a few momentary intonation problems in the orchestra, but on the whole its performance was excellent: the first movement mysterious, the second crisp and energetic, the third contemplative and the finale dramatic.

Four soloists heightened the drama: soprano Marilyn Moore Brown, mezzo-soprano Delores Ziegler, tenor Keith Craig and bass Eric Johnson. All sang well; Craig made a particularly strong impression.

-- **Joseph McLellan**