

Music review: Richmond Symphony Orchestra

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The [Richmond Symphony Orchestra](#) wowed classical music aficionados during its Masterworks performance at [the Carpenter Theatre](#).

"Dancers, Dreamers and Presidents for Orchestra," written by Haitian-American contemporary composer Daniel Bernard Roumain, launched the energetic opening piece. It was inspired by a 21-second dance shared by then-Sen. Barack Obama and Ellen DeGeneres on her TV show in 2007.

His message is one of hope that the road to peace might be better served by dancing together than haggling over our differences.

The composition, which was commissioned by the Sphinx Commissioning Consortium, is fundamentally a dance piece. It appears to include a part of everything Roumain has met in his musical life in terms of the classical and pop world.

As the three movements of the piece unveil, the element of surprise is intriguing. "Dancers" begins with a banging solo for the timpani and drum kit, so reminiscent of Afro-Caribbean melodies.

In "Dreamers," the contrabass section makes its dramatic entry, while another incarnation of musical vignette unfolds.

Chordal patterns again repeat in "Presidents" but quickly morph into hip-hop beats creating a crowded score. Here Roumain's musical interpretation comes off as fragmented. But this may be purely intentional, as discontent ultimately breeds fragmentation in our world.

Tomasi's Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra

The trumpet, which dates to at least 1,500 B.C., has been a victim of musical snobbery in history. But certainly not when Thomas Hooten is playing "Concerto for Trumpet" by French composer Henri Tomasi.

The lyrical piece is neo-classic in texture, melody and rhythm and has three of the maestro's signature trademarks. The music is structured, concise and clear.

While some may regard this particular work as slightly brittle, Hooten breathes life into the opening movement of the trumpet cadenza. While he appears to fatigue a bit during the cartoon-music finale, he nonetheless leaves the stage with a standing ovation.

Symphony No. 6 in B Minor, Opus 74, "Pathétique"

One of the great classical music composers is Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky. And while Symphony No. 6 in B Minor was meant to be a celebration of life, he died nine days after its premiere.

It begins with the somber voice of the double basses and is punctuated by the violas' mournful voice. Listening carefully, one instinctively feels that something is haunting the composer's mind.

The Richmond Symphony Orchestra does a flawless job of interpreting this agitation. All that was left in its wake was thunderous applause.