

Castleton Festival Orchestra Critical Acclaim

2010

“It was a viscerally exciting performance—unsurprisingly the best of the evening, loaded with razzle-dazzle and popular Americana. It was a treat for the audience, and a gold standard that the Festival’s young conductors can aspire to. Not surprisingly, at the conclusion of this piece, Friday’s capacity crowd howled, whistled, and yelled their approval, spontaneously rising for a standing ovation that was clearly well merited. Mr. Maazel smiled broadly as he acknowledged the audience’s approval—something he doesn’t often do. And the faces of the young musicians, having played their heart out for him simply beamed. They knew they’d all done something wonderful together. It was an extraordinary conclusion to a wonderful concert under a starry Rappahannock County night.”

Terry Ponick, Washington Times (on Gershwin’s *American in Paris*)

“Maazel drew an assured performance from his players that nicely projected the music’s colorful details.”

George Loomis, Financial Times (on Puccini’s *Il tabarro*)

“No less polished was the resident orchestra, a group of musicians all under 32 hailing from some of the top conservatories around the world. On the weekend I was there, they were given centre stage for an all-French programme with a rotating cast of conductors ideally suited to the summer haze. The Castleton conducting fellows were all on fine form, but all bets were off when Maazel took the podium for Debussy’s *Pelléas and Mélisande* suite and the final two movements from Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique*. Not only does the maestro bring out the best in these young musicians, they bring out the best in him.”

Olivia Giovetti, Gramophone Magazine

“The musical performance was excellent, as we have come to expect from the operas presented by Maazel, not least because of his confident knowledge of the score, a sure presence at the podium coordinating singers on the stage with the musicians in the pit. The orchestra sounded polished and surprisingly full, given that the limited pit -- actually dug into the ground this year, part of an enlarged and sturdier festival tent -- required a somewhat reduced orchestration...”

Charles Downey, Ionarts.com (on Puccini’s *Il Trittico*)

“The festival, which began with bracing and beyond-professional performances of Puccini’s “Il Trittico” triptych of emotion-laden one-act operas, ended Sunday with a final bang: an all-Beethoven concert performance by the young and astonishingly accomplished Festival Orchestra. Maazel, grinning at and cajoling his players while missing not one beat or cue, conducted most of the concert’s first half, taken up by an impressive rendering of Beethoven’s difficult and under-appreciated 8th Symphony.”

Roger Piantadosi, Rappahannock News

“The young musical talent was predominantly in the orchestra pit for this double bill, which featured Stravinsky as strong and solid as if hewn in stone -- almost oddly solid for this music -- under Maazel, and Falla lithe and ingratiating under Chang.”

Anne Midgette, Washington Post

“...the youthful orchestra paraded an elegant woodwind section, agile strings and brass and a clutch of percussionists whose talents spanned everything from the most delicate triangle touches to a physical assault on the tympani at the end of the Berlioz “Symphonie Fantastique” that left the attacker red-faced and sweaty.”

Joan Reinthaler, Washington Post

“The orchestra performed elegantly under Maestro Maazel’s baton, particularly in the score’s more symphonic moments where they articulated the plot’s growing sense of menace with a series of marvelously-layered dissonant passages.”

Terry Ponick, Washington Times (on Puccini’s *Il tabarro*)

“... clearly he (Maestro Maazel) has made a deep connection on some level with the young musicians who perform in his Castleton Festival. They give him their absolute best and it shows. Excellence somehow still begets excellence. It also makes each presentation at Castleton, whether symphonic or operatic, worthy of each ticket’s purchase price.”

Terry Ponick, Washington Times (on Puccini’s *Suor Angelica*)

“...the Festival’s small ensemble was conducted crisply by Maestro Lorin Maazel who also did a good job making sure the pit was well-coordinated with the action and dialogue on stage. The notable and difficult violin solos in this production were flawlessly executed by special guest violinist Jennifer Koh, who graciously performed in the orchestra pit with the other players.”

Terry Ponick, Washington Times (on Stravinsky’s *A Soldier’s Tale*)

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“This was a production (Britten’s *The Rape of Lucretia*) which demanded, and received utmost sensitivity. It was shaped for the dimensions of the theatre, sculpted with the spirit of Lorin Maazel, and ideal for its spacious bucolic setting at Castleton Farm. More important was the musicianship involved, beginning with the orchestra. Members of the Qatar Philharmonic, at Castleton for the summer, were conducted by Andreas Weiser, one of Mr. Maazel’s assistants for many years. His secret was to intermingle the sounds of the individual instruments with the largely contrapuntal singing. The coupling, even with Baroque style piano and harp, was seamless.”

Harry Rolnik, Concertonet.com

“At their best, the operatic productions at Castleton Farms match musical excellence with stage direction of the utmost vision.”

Michael Lodico, Ionarts.com

“Festival Artistic Director Lorin Maazel began at the podium for Bartók’s *Gioco delle coppie* movement from the *Concerto for Orchestra*, with a patient demeanor teaching and guiding the orchestra with a light touch. Along with the audience, Maazel assumed good intentions from all participants, who played their hearts out in a work offering a virtuosic moment for everyone.”

Michael Lodico, Ionarts.com

