



Zorá String Quartet



The soulful Zorá Quartet deserved a bigger audience

By Angela Allen | Oregon ArtsWatch | July 13, 2016

Sunday evening's Zorá Quartet concert at Clackamas Community College was refreshingly short (about an hour) and delightfully performed. Unfortunately, the free concert was deplorably attended. About 50 people heard this high-spirited soulful presentation of Beethoven and Debussy string quartets at Niemeyer Center. The concert was Chamber Music Northwest's first free offering in the area in its 46-year history. Let's hope the poor turnout doesn't make it the last for Clackamas County or other suburban communities.

Zorá, which means "sunrise" in Bulgarian, is a protégé, or apprentice, group at the festival this summer. Its members – from Bangkok, the United States, Shanghai, and Melilla, Spain – are stupendous musicians in graduate chamber-music studies at Indiana University. They play like well-seasoned pros tuned into one another for years, but they play with so much exuberant passion, they practically fall out of their seats. They are the future of chamber music.

You'll have another chance to hear them. They perform again at 8 p.m. Wednesday, July 13, at Alberta Rose Theater.

Zorá's approach to Ludwig van Beethoven's String Quartet in F Major, Op. 135 was vivacious and playful with one melody fanning out into the next. Lively arpeggios and droll fade-outs filled out the first two movements. The scherzo allowed us to savor first violinist Dechopol Kowintaweewat's lyrical, sensitive playing in an Italian-style aria. Kowintaweewat's part was girded with Seula Lee's second violin, Pablo Munoz Salido's viola, and Zizai Ning's gorgeous cello. This 26-minute string quartet was Beethoven's last and most lighthearted. Zorá made nice work of it.

Claude Debussy's String Quartet in G Minor, Op. 10 was charming with its sprightly pizzicato work. Impressionistic, expressive and energetic, the piece is a crowd-pleaser as was Zorá's rendition. It showcases each musician's chops.

Zorá performed Spanish composer Joaquin Turina's "La oracion del torero" ("The Bullfighter's Prayer"), a bit of a chamber-music warhorse. You can hear the quiet steady toreador amid the crazy bullfighting arena in the eight-minute composition. The Beethoven and Debussy quartets proved far more memorable, but even in this oft-heard piece, there was nothing to complain about.

These musicians deserve all the prizes they continue to win, including the 2015 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition and a slew of others. They are definitely on the rise and in the future.