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Hamburg Symphony Splendid

By George Hubbard
Post and Courier Reviewer

The Hamburg Symphony Orchestra took the audience in Gaillard Auditorium by storm Wednesday night with elegant, strong playing and superb musicianship. The orchestra played with intense dedication, a suave style and a string tone so sumptuous that it was like silk.

Violinist Robert McDuffie was the outstanding soloist in Tchaikovsky's violin concerto in a performance that bubbled and danced. Thanks to the Gaillard's funky acoustics, he sometimes had to push pretty hard to be heard above the ensemble, but his "take no prisoners" approach paid rich dividends. McDuffie and conductor Andrey Boreyko were perfectly in sync in the dodging and weaving of the fiery first movement, and the second movement was richly realized.

The hard-driving final allegro nearly had McDuffie dancing right off the platform, and the punchy trepak rolled through to a steamroller conclusion. One does not recall this movement ever played at such a blistering tempo. Tremendous!

The program opened with Mendelssohn's "The Hebrides" overture. It was almost too gentle an account to depict that Scottish location, but it was beautiful playing, with clear and clean string sections, and excellent balance.

The second half of the concert was the second symphony of Johannes Brahms. The orchestra gave a clear account throughout, even where the composer's harmonic structure is thick and bottom-heavy.

Thanks to the Charleston Concert Association for bringing this splendid orchestra.

This review appeared in some editions of Thursday's newspaper.

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