

D E S E R E T

Morning News

Violinist captivates audience

By Jessica Harrison

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Violinist Robert McDuffie took resounding command of the Abravanel Hall stage Friday night, captivating the audience with an emotional and dynamic performance.

McDuffie joined conductor Keith Lockhart in an electrifying performance of Miklos Rozsa's Violin Concerto.

A classically trained composer, Rozsa gained fame for composing Hollywood film scores such as "Ben-Hur" and "Spellbound" rather than concert music. But his "serious" works have proven to be just as dynamic.

McDuffie tackled the concerto, which has a Hungarian folk flavor, with ease. He expertly articulated the demanding passages, capturing the nuances as he jumped between playful phrasing and fevered attacks.

His heartfelt interpretation of the Lento cantabile, with its hopeful sorrow, left listeners breathless. The symphony's subtle and reserved accompaniment added further depth and emotion to the performance.

The orchestra opened the evening with Erich Korngold's "Sursam Corda," a lanky concert overture that was booed and hissed at its premiere. Like Rozsa, Korngold is best known for his work in films. In fact he later recycled much of "Sursam Corda's" melodic material for his Academy Award-winning score of "The Adventures of Robin Hood."

With its saber-like flicker and textured orchestration, "Corda" has the feel of a swashbuckling romance. And Lockhart brought an energetic youth to the work, capturing its soaring, tender and somewhat adventurous themes.

Beethoven's Symphony No. 7 was the night's concluding work, adding a formal structure in contrast to the night's previous selections.

Known for its rhythmic drive and frenzied sense of celebration, the piece is considered one of Beethoven's finest.

The sonata form first-movement Vivace, with its dominating dance-like rhythms, was played with ambitious vigor. A more restrained, reflective Allegretto and breathless double scherzo followed. Filled with restless energy, the Allegro finale became an intoxicating whirlwind that brought the audience to its feet.