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BCO closes season with a fine Haydn

By [Jim Lowe](#) Times Argus Staff

BURLINGTON – The Burlington Chamber Orchestra, Vermont's only full-season professional chamber orchestra, closed its 2008-2009 season with a fine performance of Haydn's Symphony No. 7 that was enthusiastically received by Saturday's capacity crowd at the University of Vermont Recital Hall.

Having just completed its second season, the BCO is developing into a serious professional ensemble. Area instrumentalists have been working under the direction of Michael Hopkins, UVM professor, composer and bass player, and the result is becoming cohesive and rewarding to hear. Indicative of the level is the participation of Vermont Symphony Orchestra members, principal cellist John Dunlop and assistant concertmaster Kathy Andrew, among others.

Saturday's concert introduced an outstanding high school saxophone player and an attractive new piece by a Tennessee composer, but the highlight of the evening was a performance of an early Haydn symphony that was all about the joy of music-making. Haydn is considered the father of the symphony and he wrote 104, but his early efforts bear many similarities with the symphony's predecessor, the concerto grosso.

Haydn's Symphony No. 7, "Le Matin (The Morning)," mixes elements of both styles, employing both the growing sophistication of fledgling symphonic writing and the concertante style utilizing solo playing from principal strings. This early symphony is truly filled with the brilliance of a sunny morning.

Hopkins led a traditional but sensitive and nuanced performance and the orchestra responded with an appropriately restrained enthusiasm. Although not refined, the ensemble playing was cohesive and the solos were well executed, particularly the duets between concertmaster Ira Morris and principal cellist Dunlop. Most importantly, the work was performed, within the Classical confines of form and taste, with a contagious effervescence and joy.

The BCO has instituted a Young Artist Solo Competition and the winner is featured as soloist in the final concert of the season. Essex High School senior

Dan Rome performed Glazunov's E-flat Alto Saxophone Concerto, Opus 109, with warmth and expressiveness. Although there were moments of muddy articulation and nervous vibrato in the high register, Rome's performance successfully conveyed the beauty of this Russian Romantic virtuosity.

The BCO has also instituted a composers' competition to bring new scores to the orchestra. David P. Sartor's "Reveries" for string orchestra was a 7-minute work, attractive and tonal, with just enough harmonic and rhythmic dissonance to keep it interesting. The flavor was something like Barber's "Adagio for Strings," as Hopkins mentioned from the podium, but it lacks the introspection of the Barber. Still, based on only one listening, this work is well hearing again.

The concert opened with Handel's Concerto Grosso, Opus 6, No. 8, one of that brilliant composer's darker efforts. The fast movements, though not perfectly together, were appropriately light and lively, but the slow movements were not clear in their direction.

The BCO has announced its 2009-2010 season, which opens with Montpelier pianist Michael Arnowitt in Mozart's Concerto No. 23 in A Major, K. 488, Sept. 12 at the UVM Recital Hall, Sept. 13 at the Barre Opera House.
