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The Utah Symphony brushes up its Shakespeare

Review »
Orchestra teams up with guests from theater fest in a fun-filled evening.

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At A Glance

Utah Symphony

Music of Haydn, Handel and Mendelssohn.

With » Conductor Nicholas McGegan, women of the Utah Symphony Chorus, soloists and narrators from the Utah Shakespeare Festival.

When » Reviewed Friday, Feb. 25; repeats Saturday, Feb. 26, at 8 p.m.

Where » Abravanel Hall, 123 W. South Temple, Salt Lake City.

Running time » Just over 2 hours, including intermission.

Tickets » \$20 to \$55 at www.utahsymphony.org or 801-355-ARTS

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BY CATHERINE REESE NEWTON
The Salt Lake Tribune

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A rare collaboration between the Utah Symphony and the Utah Shakespeare Festival makes for a fun-filled program this weekend in Abravanel Hall.

Festival founder Fred Adams, co-artistic director David Ivers, education director Michael Don Bahr and actor Kymberly Mellen enlivened and illuminated the orchestra's performance of Mendelssohn's incidental music for "A Midsummer Night's Dream," interspersing the music with some of the best-loved passages from the play. Adams appeared to be having the time of his life as the mischievous Puck, while Bahr and Mellen earned laughs as fairy royalty Oberon and Titania. But it was Ivers, enacting the supremely silly tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe, who had not only the crowd but several members of the orchestra in stitches.

Guest conductor Nicholas McGegan presided over a lively, skillfully colored performance by the Utah Symphony, the women of the chorus and soloists Angela Theis and Kate Tombaugh.

Earlier in the evening, the personable McGegan lived up to his reputation as an early-music expert, leading the orchestra in crisp and charming performances of Haydn's Symphony No. 59 ("Fire") and Handel's "Music for the Royal Fireworks." The Handel piece featured some especially dynamic playing by timpanist George Brown and the orchestra's trumpeters.

creese@sltrib.com

Twitter: @cathycomma

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