

Tien Hsieh, piano – “Seductive Saint-Saens” Wraps Up RSO Season – 4/13/16

On the evening of April 8, as local classical music lovers prepared to attend the final **Roswell Symphony Orchestra** concert of the season, Mother Nature cooperated by bringing a gentle April shower.

It cleaned and brightened the spring green of the local foliage. With that encouragement, and the promise of an outstanding program and gifted guest artist, a cheerful crowd arrived at Pearson Auditorium on the next evening, Saturday, prepared for musical enjoyment. Soon the trumpet fanfare called the audience to their seats. The concert master appeared, followed soon after by Dr. John Farrer, brilliant longtime director of RSO, and they rose as the National Anthem was played.

The first composition was the “Academic Festival Overture, Opus 80,” composed by Johannes Brahms to honor the university which had offered him an honorary degree.

Despite the “educational-sounding” title, Brahms’ work contained more of his friends’ drinking songs, reflecting their political beliefs. It was considered somewhat light-hearted at the time, and was not welcomed by the college’s academic faculty when it premiered in 1881. As usual, RSO musicians played it well.

At this juncture, the stage seating was reconfigured, and the concert grand piano was placed on stage in preparation for the performance of the guest artist, **Tien Hsieh**, an accomplished pianist and graduate of Manhattan School of Music. According to biographical data, she was born in Taiwan, and began her early musical studies with her mother. She was only 9 years old when her family immigrated to the United States. She has won numerous awards in competition throughout musical centers of the world.

She was welcomed by the maestro and seated at the keyboard. She wore a long black dress with a colorful half-drape, which accentuated her dark up-swept hair. Hsieh chose to play “Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 2, in G Minor, Opus 22,” by Camille Saint-Saens. Perhaps it is appropriate for one who has been successful from an early age, to be playing a composition by Saint-Saens, since he was a great child prodigy who began to play piano at the age of two.



From the opening notes, it was apparent that the artist was in her element as she had RSO musicians and the audience enthralled, listening intently, and watching her every move. At the close of her performance, the room was filled with enthusiastic applause and bravos, as the audience quickly rose in a standing ovation.

A short intermission followed, the onstage seating was rearranged, and the piano moved off-stage.

It is an unspoken salute to the depth and ability of Maestro Farrer and RSO orchestra members in selecting the next composition for the program: “Symphony No. 4 in F Minor, Opus 36,” by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Written in four movements, none of which could be described as pretty or lyrical, although he was capable of such work (as evidenced by “Swan Lake” and others). The challenging Symphony No. 4 is filled with loud discordance, as the composer strikes out musically against a fate that brought the numerous problems he encountered. It is dedicated to his friend, a wealthy widow who was actually his benefactor and admirer. The composer was homosexual, married late and unhappily, worried when a friend attempted suicide, and hated the unkind people who gossiped about his lifestyle, causing him to question any reference to him as a genius composer.

He lived only 53 years, and his early death likely robbed us of additional memorable compositions.

Maestro Farrer directed the entire Symphony without a score before him, amazing as it may seem. At the last note, concert attendees responded enthusiastically with a standing ovation and thunderous applause. They left reluctantly, finding it difficult to leave the site of such fulfilling music – but there’s always next season to anticipate!

