

## Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players

*"...a group that revels in dusting off obscurities..."*

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#### **The Creations of Interpreters: Conductors as Composers**

By ALLAN KOZINN

Unlike pianists and violinists, conductors don't start perfecting their technique as 5-year-olds. They usually start with an instrument and undertake the full rigors of musical training, including theory and composition studies, before they take up the baton for the first time. Some abandon composition early; some continue to compose throughout their conducting careers, hoping to leave a legacy that will survive them in ways that their performances will not.

The Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players, a group that revels in dusting off obscurities, devoted its program on Monday afternoon (and a repeat on Monday evening) at Good Shepherd-Faith Presbyterian Church to works by five composers who were best known during their lives (and in all but one case, thereafter as well) as conductors.

Most of the pieces offered are known through recordings, and the one score by a conductor whose music has eclipsed his reputation as an interpreter — Mahler's Piano Quartet, a single youthful movement — has been turning up in concert more frequently lately, this year being the centenary of Mahler's death. But the group's efforts proved illuminating, if only because one of the scores, Felix Weingartner's Octet (Op. 73), is a piece worth a fuller revival.

Weingartner, whose career was based mostly in Vienna, was among the first conductors to record plentifully, and collectors still prize his recordings of the Beethoven and Brahms symphonies. As its opus number suggests, the Octet is a mature work, composed in 1925, when Weingartner was in his early 60s.

Granted, the work pays little heed to the experimental approach to harmony that Schoenberg and his students were exploring at the time. But its 36 minutes are packed with richly lyrical themes, sumptuously scored in a late Romantic style, with occasional nods — well, O.K., full-scale salutes — to Brahms and Mahler.

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Yet it also has an original spark, and its challenges for the performers — an ensemble that mirrors the woodwind, brass and string scoring of Schubert’s Octet — are ample. Most notably, it has a prominent, perilously chromatic horn line, which Karl Kramer played beautifully here, and its clarinet and bassoon writing is spirited and shapely.

A pair of songs by Toscanini — “Neurosi” (“Neurosis”) and “Son Gelosa!” (“I Am Jealous!”), both composed in 1885 — proved more charming than memorable, and Gina Cuffari, a soprano (though she is usually the group’s bassoonist), sang them with the right

balance of gracefulness and passion.



Michael Brown was a supportive accompanist and held the spotlight ably in Mahler’s thoroughly Brahmsian quartet and in a vital, thoroughly Romantic (here the most prominent influences were Brahms and Dvorak) Piano Quintet that George Szell composed in 1911, when he was about 14.

Between those appealing, if derivative scores, Mr. Brown played a lovely, subtly virtuosic cadenza for Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 24 by Jens Nygaard, the ensemble’s founder, who died in 2001, but whose fascination with rarities continues to drive its programming.

The next Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players concert is on Monday at Good Shepherd-Faith Presbyterian Church, 152 West 66th Street, Manhattan; (212) 799-1259, [jupitersymphony.com](http://jupitersymphony.com).

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