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Review *Music*

Haddonfield Symphony, full of color

By Daniel Webster
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Nothing tests an orchestra's maturity more than the music that 20th-century French and Spanish composers wrote to portray each other's landscapes and dances. The music breathes and sighs, bursts with excitement, and whirls and hesitates through intricate dances. It was in this world that the Haddonfield Symphony moved with confidence but not quite matching fluency Saturday in the concert at the Lenape Arts Center in Marlton, Burlington County.

In all, conductor Rossen Milanov worked wonders with this young ensemble, molding phrases and shading textures to find the magic in Ravel, Falla and Rodrigo. There remained just the final step up, to phrases without seams and edges, to colors that evolve like sunrise, and to energy that matches the pulse of imagined festive scenes.

Still, reaching the penultimate step represents admirable achievement. There were flavor and atmosphere in Ravel's *Rapsodie Espagnole*, and plenty of mystic poetry in Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez* with the remarkable guitarist Jason Vieaux.

The soloist in the Rodrigo music used his fierce technical gifts to inspire orchestral support to meet his flights and moody arias. Colors glinted and deepened as Vieaux built theatrical scenes in each section. As he explored those moods and quick splashes of sound, he displayed articulation that seemed just beyond the possible. Those sudden passages gave the work exuberance, sly humor, and a sense of daring. Milanov urged the orchestra to partake of the soloist's vitality in what was the best part of the evening's performance.

The conductor had all the

right instincts for Ravel's *Rapsodie*, but the subtleties of that atmospheric writing were sometimes out of reach for his players. The second and third movements were high points of this sensitive reading, evoking bolder hues and more definite musical shapes. Milanov kept the pulse of the dances firmly in place as the sections of the orchestra took turns in the elaborate gradations of sound Ravel used. It was a performance that met the standards of many larger orchestras, and confirmed the growth of this one.

In the evening's first half, assistant conductor Benjamin Loeb guided a sturdy reading of Falla's *Three-Cornered Hat Suite*; Milanov closed with Ravel's tour de force, *Bolero*.