

**Christopher Taylor, pianist
with the Colorado Symphony**

Lost music richly deserves resurrection

By Kyle MacMillan
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The Nazis brutally disrupted a classical-music continuum dating back to Johann Sebastian Bach and beyond by killing composers or forcing them to flee, derailing careers and suppressing their works.

For decades after World War II, many of these composers were all but forgotten. But slowly, no doubt too slowly, their music is coming back to light and being performed.

The Colorado Symphony joined the worldwide effort to recover these voices, presenting a moving, deeply inspiring program Friday and Saturday evenings titled "Hope and Despair" — a high point of Denver's 2007-08 classical season.

Giving the presentation added poignancy were music director Jeffrey Kahane's gripping remarks about his family's ties to the Holocaust, especially his quotation from a letter his grandfather wrote as he waited in Havana for sanctuary in the United States.

There are no doubt pressing moral, historical and, yes, personal reasons to perform this lost music, but perhaps the best reason is simply that much of it is very high quality. To set the tone for all that was to come, the program (reviewed Friday evening) began with Kurt Weill's Suite for Wind Orchestra from "The Threepenny Opera," with its familiar cabaret flavor evoking the free-wheeling, decadent flavor of 1920s Berlin.

Then came the evening's centerpiece, the Piano Concerto, Op. 25, by Viktor Ullmann, who died at Auschwitz in 1944. This extraordinary work, which received its much-belated American premiere in 2004 at Aspen Music Festival, deserves a regular place in the repertoire.

It shares some of the emotional rawness of Dmitri Shostakovich's music, from the strident, rhythmic insistency of the first movement to the mocking scherzo in the third movement, with its echoes of the earlier Weill.

Christopher Taylor, a versatile, ready-for-anything soloist, delivered a brilliant, intense performance, adroitly handling the pounding, sometimes repetitive passagework of the opening movement.

He then showed a totally different side, bringing a suave elegance to Wladyslaw Szpilman's surprisingly upbeat Concertino for Piano and Orchestra, a kind of Polish "Rhapsody in Blue."

The program ended with Weill's Symphony No. 2.



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