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THE BOSTON GLOBE TUESDAY, APRIL 12, 2005

Youth symphony exudes passion

By Richard Dyer

GLOBE STAFF

For a music lover, there are few thrills comparable to the discovery of a great work like the Verdi Requiem. It can happen only once, but something similar occurs at every concert by a first-rate youth orchestra like the Greater Boston Youth Symphony because most of the players are performing the piece for the first time, and they share their excitement with you.

Most of Sunday's performance of the Requiem was first-rate. Music director Federico Cortese has the music in his blood; he led it with imagination, sensitivity, and passion, setting the highest standard but also providing a safety net. The Chorus Pro Musica specializes in such blood-and-thunder repertoire and sang with power, involvement, and discipline.

The teenage orchestra played superbly, with the thrill of discovery and the polish of thorough rehearsal; nearly all the challenges, such as the difficult cello opening of the "Offertorium," were securely

Greater Boston Youth Symphony Orchestras

Federico Cortese and

Joel Bard, conductors

At: Symphony Hall, Sunday night

met. There were terrific solos by oboist Matt Gill, bassoonist Hannah Taylor, and flutist Emi Ferguson, and the bass drum of Ben Tilston was like the crack of doom.

There was an interesting mix-n-match solo quartet. Tenor Philip Webb and bass Stephen Morscheck were plain, solid, and reliable, estimable qualities not to be taken for granted. Soprano Indra Thomas and mezzo Eleni Matos were more histrionic and exciting, but less reliable. Matos was vivid and often lovely, but less secure at both extremes of her range.

Thomas, who is on the track to stardom, boasts a glorious instrument. She put the printed music to the "Libera me" aside and poured her full heart and soul into the music. But she doesn't have full control of her assets yet, and there are danger signs. She has trouble singing softly, and at all

dynamic levels the voice can stick and the tone fail. The famous pianissimo B-flat in the "Libera me" was neither soft nor sustained; the end of the "Offertorium" was an unholy mess. This is a major talent, no question, but whether it will fulfill itself is not yet clear.

The concert opened with the Repertory Orchestra of even younger players. Under Joel Bard's energetic direction they offered two of Bartok's "Four Orchestral Pieces" — an unsatisfying selection, but played with skill and a sense of atmosphere.

Concert update

■ **MayFair in Harvard Square** — the 22d annual free, outdoor event is on , May 1, with music by the Walkmen, State Radio, Dana Fuchs, Toussaint and the China Band, and others.

■ **LeAnn Rimes and the Boston Pops Orchestra** — at Symphony Hall May 23. Tickets \$20-\$92, on sale Friday at 10 a.m.

STEVE MORSE