

Review: Rózsa concerto a blooming success

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By Catherine Reese Newton
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Robert McDuffie plays one of the world's most famous violins, thanks largely to the unique consortium - including R.E.M. bassist Mike Mills and former NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue - he brought together to acquire it for his use.

The 1735 Guarnerius del Gesù was worth every dime. It sounds magical in McDuffie's capable hands.

McDuffie gave an exciting performance of Miklós Rózsa's Violin Concerto in his third visit to the Utah Symphony on Friday night. He brought palpable urgency to the fast movements and nostalgic beauty to the slow one. He employed his pliable, singing tone to especially arresting effect in the brilliant first-movement cadenza. Keith Lockhart's well-paced direction inspired one of the orchestra's best supporting performances, matching McDuffie's intensity and illuminating a wealth of detail in Rózsa's spicy score. The soloist had a number of delightful little dialogues with various orchestra principals, including Christopher McKellar on viola, George Brown on timpani and Craig Fineshriber on snare drum.

The evening's big draw, of course, was Beethoven's Symphony No. 7. Friday's performance was one of Lockhart's better Beethoven outings, and the orchestra sounded more energized under his direction than it has in many Beethoven symphonies lately. Its muscular sound in the finale, in particular, more than made up for a little imprecision here and there. The strings brought an appealing expressiveness to the beloved *Allegretto* movement, though Lockhart's brisk tempo diminished its emotional pull.

The evening opened with Erich Wolfgang Korngold's bright and brassy Symphonic Overture ("Sursum Corda").
