

# Guest baton, voice earn bravos at symphony opener

## CONCERT REVIEW

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The precise baton of Robert LaMarchina and the brilliant voice of Margo Watson earned bravos from the audience Sunday evening as the Maui Symphony Orchestra opened the 1997-1998 concert series.

While the number of those attending the concert seemed fewer than in previous years, their enthusiasm filled the Maui Arts & Cultural Center's Castle Theater.

LaMarchina, who has led orchestras from the Honolulu Symphony to the New York Philharmonic, brought a simple clarity to the Maui orchestra with clean attacks, sharp cutoffs and fluid dynamics. The world renowned conductor made the music easy to understand, guiding the listener up Rossini's "Silken Ladder" or exciting them with brass insistence at the ending of Mozart's Symphony No. 31 in D Major.

Under LaMarchina's baton, there were moments when Maui's orchestra not only played the music, they became the music.

Appearing in the kind of gowns befitting an opening night, Watson sparkled in the eyes as well as the ears of the audience.

The three opening arias were an inspired selection that demonstrated the Salt Lake City soprano's range and versatility. In Handel's "Let the Bright Seraphim" from "Samson," Watson's duets with the trumpet soared in Castle's remarkable acoustics.

In Mozart's "Ach, Ich Fühls" from "The Magic Flute" Watson explored melancholy, sometimes in exquisite moments of near silence when an almost invisible silver thread of sound caught the melodic light.

The coloratura flash of the familiar "Sempre Libra" from Verdi's "La Traviata" showcased Watson's brilliance and captivated the listeners. The soprano sang effortlessly as though the high notes and complex musical patterns already existed and she had the delight of revealing them to the audience.

The second half of the program began with Albinoni's Concerto in F for Two Oboes and Strings featuring Paul Wells and Merry Kay Kiyon on oboes. With the kind of simplicity that requires excellence, the performance was a standout of the evening — precise and clear.

Watson presented more contemporary works after intermission including the haunting aria from Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess," "My Man's Gone Now," where voice and orchestra combine in a wail of despair.

LaMarchina, with experience ranging from music director and conductor of the Metropolitan Opera National Company to the Hawaii Opera Theater, has an intimate understanding of the marriage of the instrument of the singer and the instruments of the orchestra.

The performance ended with "E.T. Adventures" by John Williams, recreating the music from the movie with twinkling violins and Hollywood brass. The orchestra seemed to revel in the lush harmonies and the audience loved it, cheering the musicians ending the concert with a standing ovation.

Along with the music, the Maui Symphony Orchestra also mounted an art show in the Castle lobby with works by Diana Dorenzo, Guy Buffet, Robert Lyn Nelson and Annie Retivat. The paintings and prints were on sale to benefit the orchestra.

The next MSO concert will be "Handel's Christmas Messiah" Dec. 20, a traditional performance of the Christmas portions of the popular oratorio plus a selection of carols.