



## **Orchestra celebrates its 10th with Beethoven's Ninth**

**By Keith Powers / Contributing writer**

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The Ninth deserves its reputation for greatness, and presents challenges to any musical ensemble.

FALMOUTH – Every performance of Beethoven's Ninth becomes a special event.

There are the historic ones, like Leonard Bernstein leading an international orchestra in East Berlin's Schauspielhaus, to celebrate the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Richard Wagner was famous for conducting the Ninth, and did so many times. So did Georg Solti. Closer to home, the Boston Symphony Orchestra has for years concluded its Tanglewood season with the great symphony.

Even an amateur chamber orchestra – joined by additional musicians, and a full-throated chorus with four excellent soloists – can turn the Ninth into a memorable occasion. And so it was with the Falmouth Chamber Players Orchestra this Sunday in the Simon Center for the Arts at Falmouth Academy, with music director John Yankee leading the ensemble in a celebration of its own 10th anniversary.

The Ninth deserves its reputation for greatness, and presents challenges to any musical ensemble. To ignore that would be to ignore the vast expressive possibilities in Beethoven's score. But though not all of those possibilities would be realized in this performance, there is still an emotional heft in the work that comes across even in the attempt – especially in an honest, well-rehearsed, integrated and spirited performance like this one.

With the piece best known for its uplifting vocal part in the concluding movement – the first-ever use of voice in a symphony – one almost forgets that the orchestra has played for good 45 minutes even before the singers take the stage.

The eerie opening notes emerge like the sound of an orchestra tuning up, assembling itself into coherence from chaos. Two themes characterize the first movement – the same theme, but in minor and major – along with its lengthy coda, a climactic build-up that lasts far longer than normal.

Overall, the balance of the sound was too even, leaving the articulation of phrases blurred. Not enough of the details stood out. Generally speaking, this symphony converses: strings play a figure, and winds hover over it. The timpani (a prodigious part, well played by Tim Maxwell) lays some groundwork, and horns or strings accent it. Given a generally even sound among sections, lots of this articulation was lost.

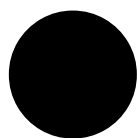
But there was exemplary playing: The winds, especially oboe (Melanie Hayn, Tegan Sutherland), principal flute (Lorrie Hassan) and horn (Elizabeth Jones), brought to life many difficult, exposed phrases.

The second-movement scherzo presented yet more challenges, and the playing here was notably crisper, especially in the strings. The slow movement – another long, difficult section, featuring many tempo changes and modulations – could have used a shot of adrenaline here and there.

But the finale woke everyone up. It began with the estimable baritone David Kravitz, whose call for joy – “Freude, freude” – epitomized the optimistic tone of Beethoven’s libretto with his forceful, clarion tones. Kravitz seemed to welcome everyone – players and audience – into the celebration, along with the chorus and his fellow soloists: Jason McStoots (tenor), Deborah Selig (soprano) and Stephanie Kacoyanis (alto).

The Falmouth Chorale – substantially augmented by singers from many organizations – numbered almost 90 strong, and sang with clarity and gusto. Yankee actually seemed to get crisper playing from his orchestra in the finale, when he had chorus and soloists to manage as well. The coda charges into a bright, positive future – nearly 200 years after its premiere.

The next Falmouth Chamber Players Orchestra programs will be family concerts featuring Saint-Saens’ “Carnival of the Animals” and Prokofiev’s “Peter and the Wolf” on May 19 in Sandwich and May 20 in Falmouth. For tickets and information, visit [www.falmouthchamberplayers.org](http://www.falmouthchamberplayers.org).



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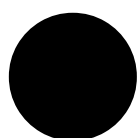
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