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## Concert Review | Charleston Symphony Orchestra

Moody's Hues: Guest conductor brings out the CSO's many colors

BY LINDSAY KOOB

Friday's second installment of Backstage Pass, the Charleston Symphony's eclectic and laid-back series, was a treasure-trove of varied classics, including a stunning new work.

American master Morton Gould's *Spirituals* is a nostalgic and sensitive distillation of the past century's civil rights movement — and it seemed a potent benediction to America's first African-American president.

The massed strings wove in and out of the orchestral fabric. The desolate opening "Proclamation" gave way to Gould's own uplifting spiritual themes in the "Sermon" movement.

Jazzy mischief prevailed in the "Little Bit of Sin" section, with its perky parodies of the old "Shortnin' Bread" tune. After the "Protest" movement's defiant march, the work ended joyfully with a triumphant "Jubilee," complete with a celebratory blues riff.

Guest conductor Robert Moody led his musicians with skill and authority, drawing precise and passionate playing from them.

Mason Bates is one of the young lions among today's tunesmiths. And the CSO upheld his glowing reputation with their inspired rendition of his *Rusty Air in Carolina*. It ingeniously evoked just about any sensory aspect of a muggy Carolina summer night you can name.

Its recorded natural night-noises were layered over shimmering, ambient orchestral textures. The sounds of assorted insects and other night creatures also came from the instruments — several of which produced strange, sputtering sonorities I'd never heard before. The composer was present, both to introduce the work and to run the electronics.

And the near-capacity crowd loved it. This piece should be required listening for those poor, misguided classical fans who think that great music ended with yesteryear's dead Europeans. It was eloquent proof that today's best composers can indeed take open-eared listeners to wonderful new places.

But that doesn't mean we can forget those fine old dead Europeans: like Felix Mendelssohn, whose *Resurrection Symphony* ended the program.

The most spiritual of his orchestral works, it employs familiar sacred themes: the "Dresden Amen" of the sober opening movement, and the triumphant tune of "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" in the fugato-laced finale

The lilting scherzo's sweetly singing woodwinds and the slow movement's tender "aria" made for choice listening, too.

You can come back anytime, Mr. Moody — so long as you keep bringing us music like this. —*Lindsay Koob*