

Reviews

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The Symphonia (St. Gregory's Episcopal Church, Boca Raton, Nov. 23)

A compelling reading of an important 20th-century organ concerto was a highlight of the opening concert of the 2025-26 season by The Symphonia, an event that made the most of its strings-only makeup with interesting repertoire choices.

The concert was led by the chamber orchestra's now-official music director, the Anglo-American conductor Alastair Willis. The organ soloist for the concert was the church's music director, Timothy Brumfield.

Brumfield and The Symphonia teamed up for the Organ Concerto (in G minor, FS 93), by 20th-century French composer Francis Poulenc. Completed in 1938, the concerto — scored for organ, strings and

timpani — offers performers and listeners the mature Poulenc: A sensual fund of melody, references to the ancient music of the Catholic Church and a feeling of insouciance and bravado signaled by surprising shifts of mood and unexpected dissonance.

Brumfield has a hugely powerful organ at his beck and call in St. Gregory's loft, and he played this exciting and quirky work with sovereign command.

For its part, The Symphonia played with expert ensemble, carefully matching their music to the soloist, who was high above the floor in the back of the church while the orchestra performed from the space just before the altar.

The audience could hear all the elements of Poulenc's style at their fullest, which is really the only way to understand this concerto.

The Poulenc was the final work on Sunday's program, which opened with a fresh selection: American composer Aaron Jay Kernis's *Musica*

Celestis, which he arranged in 1991 from the second movement of his String Quartet No. 1.

The Symphonia played Kernis's piece with precision, giving it the weight it deserved.

It was followed by a canonic staple, the *Serenade* No. 13, K. 525 (1787), of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, better-known as *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*.

The Mozart was perhaps most adversely affected by the acoustic, which often made the music sound muffled. Nevertheless, it was a good reading of this very familiar work, with all of Mozart's melodic charm and compositional wizardry engagingly on sonic display.

The well-attended concert closed with an encore: the *Air* from J.S. Bach's *Orchestral Suite No. 3* (in D, BWV 1068), known since a famous violin arrangement in the 1870s as *Air on the G-String*. The arrangement here was for strings and organ, and it sounded sweet and lovely, as it always does. — *Greg Stepanich*

The City in the City in the City (FAU Theatre Lab, Boca Raton, Nov. 23)

In the world premiere of Matthew Capodicasa's play *The City in the City in the City*, the "city" of the title is as much a character as the two women who navigate it.

Performed by Niki Fridh and Vaishnavi Sharma, this provocative two-hander touched on multiple problems of human existence while also showcasing the impressive acting chops of its actors, who carry the idiosyncrasies, guilt, suffering, and histories of the main characters and an entire city in a seamless, playful manner.

For this production, the cozy yet multi-tiered stage at FAU's Theatre Lab was covered with vibrant textiles from various cultures, with cages and Turkish lamps hanging from the ceiling.

The lights dimmed. "My mother died last week," begins Tess, played by Sharma.

It develops that Tess's father has left a package for Tess and her mother in the mysterious

fictional city of Mastavia. In searching for a traveling companion, Tess meets Laura Maynard (Fridh), a divorced woman who shares her name with Tess's late mother.

The city itself has a tumultuous history and ridiculous rules for navigating it, such as passing through a checkpoint from only one side. Each new character, whether it is an old woman in a jazz bar or a lawyer — all played by Fridh and Sharma — adopts multiple languages and ambiguous accents to fit the city.

As the two main characters engage with the city in different ways, the mystery of Tess's father and of the city itself unfolds, posing unanswered questions after unanswered questions. The ending of the play follows two essential story-writing rules: Questions get answered, and the characters are changed in the process. The final moments of this play are satisfying, and the changes occur in a way that feels appropriate. — *Erik Kvarnberg*

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Feldman will work closely with Ena Heller, the museum's CEO, to oversee all aspects of the curatorial responsibilities with a focus on highlighting the museum as a destination for modern and contemporary art.

One of her first priorities will be to rethink the exhibition schedule and to reinstall the museum's permanent installation galleries, refocusing them on the community's interest.

Her vision aligns with the museum's leadership, including that of Heller, who praised Feldman's appointment.

"Keffie distinguished herself among a very competitive pool of candidates by her comprehensive art historical knowledge, collaborative curatorial practice, and inclusive approach to education in museums," Heller said in a prepared statement. "She is a passionate communicator with a warm presence who will be a wonderful ambassador for our institution throughout South Florida and nationally."

For Feldman, she believes taking on this new role is an opportunity to build on the museum's reputation of excellence and focus on education, community and accessibility under Heller's new leadership.

Feldman says the time is right to trade Massachusetts winters for South Florida's sun and creative energy.

Once situated, she plans to explore the region's art offerings, visit other museums, snorkel, practice yoga, and, of course, immerse herself in Boca Raton's live music scene.

"I look forward to getting to know the Boca Raton and South Florida community," she says. "The museum is about more than art — it's a place to connect, reflect and imagine. I'm excited to help shape that future."



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