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By Michael J. LoPresti

SSO and SU Oratorio Society perform at Most Holy Rosary in Syracuse

For the last piece in its season-spanning Stained Glass series, the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra was assembled Sunday in front of the altar of the Most Holy Rosary Church, flanked on both sides by more than 100 members of the Syracuse University Oratorio Society. The combined ensemble performed a stirring rendition of Mozart's Coronation Mass, a complex and intricate setting of musical portions of the Roman Catholic Mass.

The performance was an exhilarating reminder to all in attendance of the ambitious and beautiful music that the vaulted stone arches of the cavernous church were meant to accommodate.

The combined orchestra and chorus were joined by four soloists: sopranos Lianne Coble and Shelley Jackson, tenor Robert Allen and bass-baritone John Buffett. The presence of the soloists - who performed sporadically throughout the piece in pairs and as a quartet, as well as on their own - lent the entire piece an arresting operatic feel. (The work would fit as well on stage as in a church.)

Before the Coronation, the SSO performed a symphony and two concertos. The symphony, Haydn's "Allelujah," was the first of the afternoon. The first movement was bright and airy, and a harpsichord accompaniment lent it a stately, regal sound. The second

movement was marked by a lovely flute solo, and the symphony ended with an expressive minuet that required precise dynamic control on the part of the orchestra.

The two concertos that followed the Haydn highlighted visiting cellist Caroline Stinson's virtuosity, as well as that of the SSO's own principal cellist, David LeDoux. Stinson and LeDoux performed together on Vivaldi's Concerto in G Minor for Two Cellos and Orchestra.

The first movement of the piece was slightly sinister and foreboding, and moved forward at a brisk, almost frantic pace. The cellos spoke as two mournful voices, matching expressiveness in beautiful harmony, during the "Largo" movement. The church swallowed the duo a bit in the last movement, but the piece ended on a sharp and satisfying note.

Cellist Stinson was featured as a soloist on Luigi Boccherini's Concerto No. 3 in G Major for Cello and Orchestra. Stinson, who performs as a soloist across North America and Europe and is on the faculty of Syracuse University, commanded the stage with her emotive and technical skill on a piece that the composer wrote to demonstrate his own cello virtuosity.

