



CLASSICAL NOTES

BY DOROTHY ANDRIES

Chicago Philharmonic

Pick-Staiger Concert Hall was crackling with excitement the evening of May 29. Holiday weekend notwithstanding, the 1,000-seat auditorium on Northwestern University's Evanston campus was just about packed for the Chicago Philharmonic's final concert of the season.

The attraction was no secret. Beethoven's magnificent Ninth Symphony was on the program, with the North Shore Choral Society and four soloists were members of the Lyric Opera Center for American Artists and the orchestra.

Sometimes great expectations can lead to disappointment, but not this time. Despite the fact that music director Larry Rachleff was unable to conduct, substitute conductor David Hoose of Boston presented an excellent concert from start to finish.

The Chicago Philharmonic is made up of Lyric Opera Orchestra members and the area's top freelancers, and the intensity of their performance was evident from the first little sonic apostrophes that opened the work.

Hoose was able to articulate the melodies with exceptional clarity, illuminating each orchestral voice as it shone through the density of the composer's music. The two-note phrases, which began so lightly, changed to slashes and finally to little two-note sighs in the splendid third movement, with the string sections gracefully layering one line upon the other with glorious ease.

The fourth movement, *Allegro assai*, may just be classical music's finest moment. It is one of those times when it seems as if nothing has ever or will ever be as beautiful.

The voices of the soloists — soprano Erica Strauss, contralto Meredith Arwady, tenor Joseph Kaiser, and bass-baritone Christian Van Horn — were clear and fresh. Van Horn was the first to sing and his voice was exceptionally strong.

The sound of the 150-voice chorus, which was positioned on the horseshoe-shaped balcony above the stage, arrived like a great storm, moving through the hall with extraordinary force. When it made the dramatic upward modulation the effect was spine-tingling.

Maestro Hoose evoked numerous shades of expression from the chorus, which had been prepared to perfection by Donald Chen. It was a crowning achievement for the North Shore Choral Society and a glorious culmination of the 15th season for the superb Chicago Philharmonic.

The Classical Notes column will be taking the summer off, but watch for Dorothy Andries' reviews of Ravinia Festival concerts in the Diversions section.