

Chamber Symphony, Simon Sure

Stephen Simon led his Washington Chamber Symphony last night in the Kennedy Center's Terrace Theater in an engaging performance of works by Mozart, Mendelssohn and the American composer Joan Tower.

Mendelssohn's "Italian" Symphony, which ended the program, was well served by Simon's conducting, which unites the baroque specialist's sensitivity to rhythmic detail and polyphonic voicing with an energetic and charismatic musicality. This combination was particularly compelling in the Presto finale, where Simon caught the intensity and vertigo of the saltarello dance form.

The familiar first movement was also effective, opening with a burst of exuberance and cheer that was quite infectious and instilled new vigor into the well-worn phrases.

The symphony's ensemble work was very good on the whole, though the strings could have benefited from more polish; articulation was lax at times, and the fugal section of the "Italian" Symphony's Allegro movement failed to dazzle as it should. Strings have to be on their best behavior in the Terrace, where bright and spare acoustics tend to highlight every blemish.

The unforgiving sound of the hall

also makes it difficult to achieve a delicate tonal balance and blend its sound in large orchestral groupings. The Mozart Concerto for Flute and Harp, K. 299, in particular suffered from this problem, but Simon succeeded all the same in giving an ex-

pressive reading of the work. Sirin Pancaroglu's performance was graceful and displayed a good sense of pacing and dynamics. Susan Deaver, the flute soloist and principal of the symphony, provided a lyrical and tonally pleasing accompaniment, but her reserved approach failed to command attention.

—Alexander Shapiro