

# An emotional celebration

By JAN JEZIORO

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The Ars Nova Musicians Chamber Orchestra, led by its music director Marylouise Nanna, presented a concert Sunday evening in the Villa Maria College auditorium that celebrated the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Province of the Felician Sisters, the teaching order at the college.

The musical apex of the program was the performance of Mozart's last Piano Concerto, No. 27 in B-Flat, with pianist Katya Grineva as soloist. The precise playing of the orchestral introduction set the tone for the performance, while the perfect balance between the orchestra and the soloist that Mozart achieved in this work was well brought out by Nanna.

Grineva gave the audience a lovely lyrical rendition of this work, letting the music speak for itself without the slightest hint of any affectation. The opening Allegro had the necessary singing quality, with Grineva making the wide jumps to the contrasting minor and then back to the major mode seem totally organic, while the orchestra pro-

## REVIEW

### Ars Nova Musicians Chamber Orchestra

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Sunday evening at Villa Maria College.

vided a nicely transparent sound. The soloist is very much to the fore in the poignantly melancholic Larghetto, with Grineva giving the audience an exquisitely refined reading. The rapid changes in the concluding Allegro were played seamlessly by Grineva, with the rich harmonies of the bravura piano passages culminating in a superb performance of Mozart's own final cadenza.

The emotional peak of the evening, for most members of this well-attended event, was a performance of what is probably the best known Polish hymn, "Serdeczna Matko" (Beloved Mother). After a short, lush Prelude for strings by contemporary composer Robert Nowak, the Felician Sisters' Choir, joined by the audience, sang the much beloved song. It was an emotional experience to hear the strong, clear

voices of the sisters singing this heartfelt plea to the Blessed Mother.

Grig was one of the earliest composers to turn to a musical style from the distant past in his "Holberg Suite." The orchestra gave a generally fine performance of this engaging piece, achieving good sonority from the initial propulsive Prelude right through to the sprightly "Rigaudon," with just a slight wavering of focus in the middle of Andante religioso.

Composed in 1951 by Tadeusz Baird, "Colas Breugnon" for flute and strings is a more recent example of the genre. This short, spirited work, with a very effective slow movement for low strings alone, was nicely handled with Christine Bailey playing the bright flute obbligato.

Nanna's transcription of Wieniawski's "Legende" had the four first violins playing the soloist part of the surprisingly successful adaptation of this popular showpiece. Her transcription of a Mazurka by the same composer was markedly different, while equally effective in its own way, with the music having the lurching quality of a village band performance.