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MUSIC

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Chamber Orchestra Of Philadelphia

It was chamber music sweet and lovely, but it put the listener in an opera frame of mind. Such was the revelation of the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia's concert at the [Library of Congress](#) on Friday evening. This superb and youthful ensemble -- one of the nation's finer chamber groups -- opened a window into conversation and intimacy in [Mozart's](#) Piano Concerto in C, while [Beethoven's](#) "Pastoral" Symphony conjured panoramas that presage the mystical worlds of Wagner and other musical pioneers.

Ignat Solzhenitsyn, the ensemble's music director (and, yes, the great Russian author's son), was conductor and soloist in Mozart's gorgeous concerto (K. 467). Solzhenitsyn made piano phrases sing in a vocal manner; filigreed and shapely, each phrase rose and grew naturally. In the opening, a vigorous back-and-forth occurred between a loner (piano) and crowd (ensemble, helped along by some marvelous woodwind solos). The second movement, used in Bo Widerberg's 1967 film "Elvira Madigan," came off as a soliloquy-like aria, and the finale was all light, tension resolved in a joyous ensemble set-piece.

The Beethoven -- blended and resonant -- brought forth images of dark storms and bountiful nature preserves. The technicolor brilliance came from the small ensemble, which allowed for fast tempos and superior detail. Perhaps Wagner gained some of his scene-painting mastery for this music; as a conductor, he banged the drum loudly on Beethoven's behalf. Little wonder, then, that the orchestra's vigorous account signaled latter-day evocative dramas such as the epic "Ring."

--Daniel Ginsberg