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Early Haydn by Chamber Orchestra

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Few conductors have gone beyond the outer edges of Franz Josef Haydn's vast continent of symphonies in this 200th anniversary year of his death. As great as it is to hear programs that mainstream Haydn - Mariss Jansons pairs *Symphony No. 100 ("Military")* with Shostakovich's portrait of military-dominated Russia in his *Symphony No. 10* - the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia's Ignat Solzhenitsyn went deep into Haydn's heartland with *Symphonies Nos. 16 and 49* in the season's opening concert.

In his ongoing exploration of early works by great composers from Mendelssohn to Brahms, Solzhenitsyn seems to hear things in them that others (including myself) do not - which was sometimes the case Sunday at the Kimmel Center's Perelman Theater. However ingratiating, *Symphony No. 16* felt like another notch in the composer's symphonic belt, though the hugely worthwhile *No. 49 ("Le passione")* shows Haydn as an experimental classicist using the foundations of the past to take the symphony into uncharted territory.

Rather than announcing itself with something eventful and animated, *No. 49* begins with a slow movement not dissimilar to Haydn's *Seven Last Words*. Listeners aren't eased into it: The music seems to start in mid-lament, something like the funeral march of Beethoven's *Eroica*, but perhaps more abruptly - with none of Haydn's decorative veneer. The slender thematic core curiously lacks his usual communicative urgency; seldom does his music make itself so difficult to sustain in such a visible place.

However, the inward, slow-building quality of the music couldn't have been more emotionally appropriate following a post-intermission speech in which the Chamber Orchestra's podium was dedicated to its beloved

patron, the late Hubert J.P. Schoemaker, whom Solzhenitsyn eulogized with an openheartedness that was startling to those who have seen only the imperious side of the conductor's personality.

More typical Haydnesque stimulation might have been promised by cellist Wendy Warner playing the composer's mid-weight, increasingly overexposed *Cello Concerto in D* - had the performance not felt like an existential crisis. Never have I heard or imagined anything like it: How could those breezy, post-rococo tunes accommodate a player with Warner's strong-minded individuality? Well, they don't. Instead, with an imposing tone and emphatic manner, Warner found great substance (matters of life and death, actually) in passages that others play merely for their functional value. The first-movement cadenza - she used the substantive one written by Emanuel Feuermann - felt like a Kafka novella experienced at warp speed. Any arguments about appropriate period style wilted in an interpretation that was completely convincing unto itself. Future cellists, beware in this repertoire: Following in Warner's wake may spell automatic disappointment.