

Santa Barbara Symphony, State Street Ballet,  
and Santa Barbara Choral Society

## O fortuna!

**A CAVALCADE OF COOPERATION** ignited a musical and visual event marking the opening of the Santa Barbara Symphony's concert season. Last Saturday's full house at the Granada Theatre gave currency literally, to the value of collaborative effort. A celebration of Santa Barbara's famously busy and exciting performing arts community, artistic partners included the Santa Barbara Center for the Performing Arts, State Street Ballet just back from a major tour of China, and the Santa Barbara Choral Society.

**DANIEL KEPL**  
**MUSIC REVIEW**

Opening the concert, Beethoven's *Leonore Overture No. 3, Op. 72b* was led by Music and Artistic Director Nir Kabaretti, who is celebrating his tenth season at the helm of the orchestra.



Leonard Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*, with the Santa Barbara Choral Society and countertenor Randall Scotting conducted by the ensemble's Artistic Director, JoAnne Wasserman, paved the way for the main attraction of the evening conducted by Kabaretti, a fully staged production of Carl Orff's splendidly entertaining *Carmina Burana*, set on State Street Ballet by New York City-based choreographer William Soleau in 2008 with costumes by A. Christina Giannini and lighting design by Lloyd Sobel.

Kabaretti was on fire Saturday, conducting with exciting rhythmic energy Beethoven's third version of the overture to his only opera, *Fidelio*. Kabaretti's interpretation was tightly finessed; appropriately dark and troubled in the opening section, increasingly confident and joyous as the story's hoary past of personal sacrifice embraces the inevitable triumph of personal liberty over institutional slavery.

*Chichester Psalms* was Bernstein's first composition after his *Third Symphony (Kaddish)*, dedicated to the memory of President John F. Kennedy. In contrast to the anguish of *Kaddish*, the *Psalms* are more affirmative and even attain a sublime serenity, the composer at last content that humanity will survive another day. Conductor JoAnne Wasserman, attentive to Bernstein's numerological interest in sevenths, both metrically and intervallically in this piece, managed to inculcate confidence from her singers despite the score's often treacherous vocal terrain.



Photos by David Bazemore

Scene from *Carmina Burana*

After intermission, the Santa Barbara Symphony, now hunkered in the Granada's orchestra pit, its percussion battery flanking both sides of the hall's proscenium arch ceremonially, the Choral Society mounted on risers above and behind a bare and darkened stage, Nir Kabaretti conducted a sonic and visual spectacle; State Street Ballet's realization of William Soleau's choreographic vision of Carl Orff's perennially popular *Carmina Burana*. A vivid choral and orchestral tale of dread destiny (*Sors immanis*), good fortune (*Sors salutis*), and the burdens of the heart (*Mihi cordi gravitas*), with soloists, soprano Maria Rey-Joly, countertenor Randall Scotting, and baritone Nigel Smith, the composer intended *Carmina* to be a multidiscipline showcase of dance, music, song, and acting. State Street Ballet Principals Leila Drake Fossek and Thomas Fant brought to life the couple whose

destiny is followed from youth to old age. The superb SSB corps of 18 dancers also enjoyed several opportunities to show off outstanding pairings, including character-rich performances by Sergei Domrachev, Marina Fliagina, Kate Kadow, Lilit Hogtalian, and Gary McKenzie. Lloyd Sobel's lighting design enhanced the tale magically, while A. Christina Giannini's costumes, a mix of earthy druidic and brighter medieval colors, brought to life the legends and rituals that Orff found so compelling. Soleau's visual imagery throughout was both simple and symphonic, his unerringly savvy matching of sound to movement, spot-on; likewise, orchestra, chorus, and soloists. A memorable evening.

**Daniel Kepl** has been writing music, theatre, and dance reviews for Santa Barbara publications since he was a teenager. His professional expertise is as an orchestra conductor.

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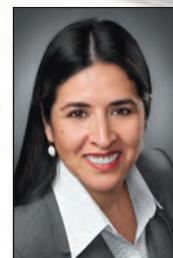
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