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REVIEW

Tafelmusik and friends throwing king-sized anniversary party

Sep 24, 2009 04:30 AM

JOHN TERAUDS
CLASSICAL MUSIC CRITIC

Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra and Arion Baroque Orchestra

★★★★ (out of 4)

Directed by Jaap ter Linden and Jeanne Lamon. To Sunday. Trinity-St. Paul's Centre, 427 Bloor St. W. **416-964-6337** (**tafelmusik.org**)

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Toronto's Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra is throwing itself a big celebration this week, and the resulting concert programme is fit for a king – or kings, to be more accurate.

Last night's opening concert at Trinity-St. Paul's Centre not only marked the start of the city's classical music season, it was also an excuse for the period-instrument orchestra to fete its 30th anniversary.

In three decades, under the leadership of violinist Jeanne Lamon, the ensemble has grown from humble beginnings at the fringes of Toronto's music scene to an orchestra of international stature. It has a longstanding residency at a German summer festival and, last month, inaugurated a new summer festival in Italy, headed by Montreal Symphony Orchestra music director Kent Nagano.

It's understandable that Tafelmusik would want to blow its own horn in high style. So, for this week's concerts, they are joined by Montreal period-instrument group Arion Baroque Orchestra. The total of 44 musicians – twice the usual number – also allowed Lamon and Arion Baroque Orchestra leader, cellist Jaap ter Linden, to choose music written for larger orchestras.

If you're talking about Baroque music, this means pieces written for festive royal occasions and opera houses. The first half of the program is made up of a ceremonial flourish by brothers André and Jacques Danican Philidor, musicians at the court of King Louis XIV, as well as a suite of orchestral music from the opera *Les Paladins*, by Jean-Philippe Rameau.

All of this is brilliantly inventive stuff based on courtly dance conventions, performed with verve and elegance last night.

The second half of the evening produced two great works by German expatriates writing in England: the grandly passionate *Overture for Double Orchestra* by Johann Christian Bach and George Frideric Handel's famous *Music for the Royal Fireworks*.

Again, the assembled forces played with energy and verve, making especially fine music out of the complex and drama-filled score by J.S. Bach's youngest son. It's hard to imagine a finer way to mark 30 successful years.

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