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Enthralling concert pulls emotion out of each note

Review: Friday's FWSO was the best we've heard anywhere in a long time.

By CHRIS SHULL



A memorable performance: Hanan Alattar and Miguel Harth-Bedoya Special to the S-T/Richard W. Rodriguez

FORT WORTH — Don't let the Main St. Arts Festival and the accompanying street closings and parking issues deter you from catching the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra this weekend at Bass Hall. Friday's concert was the best I've heard anywhere in a long time.

Featured were the luxurious *Songs of Eternity* by Behzad Ranjbaran and Tchaikovsky's dramatic Symphony No. 4 with Miguel Harth-Bedoya conducting. The *Songs* were mesmerizing, with poignant singing by soprano Hanan Alattar of poems from *The Ruba'iyat of Omar Khayyam*. The symphony was simply outstanding.

Ranjbaran, the orchestra's composer-in-residence this season, was on hand Friday. His *Awakening*, a strident piece for strings, will also be played tonight and Sunday.

Songs is in three sections of three couplets each; the poetry celebrates the mystery of life and death. Bold brassy chords have a cinematic feel; orchestra colors are scintillating. The languid progression of the third verse features Alattar unfurling graceful curlicues that spiral down, mimicking Persian folk singing. The work ends abruptly on a pure, ecstatic vocal high. It deserves to be heard again and again.

If Ranjbaran soothed with *Songs of Eternity*, Tchaikovsky began Symphony No. 4 tearing his hair out. The music is fretful, full of nervous hand-wringing and bellowing breast-beating — but also sadness, then "capricious arabesques" in the plucked third movement, and finally a grand resolve to happiness.

Harth-Bedoya brought out the voices underneath the melodies, sometimes overemphasizing them to give the sounds a glossy depth. He created a spaciousness that calmed the angst but not

the energy. Melodies coursed through the ensemble like colored threads marking a single, sinuous line. It was a performance to remember.

Fort Worth Symphony 8 tonight and 2 p.m. Sunday

Bass Hall

\$10-\$78

817-665-6000; www.fwsymphony.org