

Bamert's Beethoven bowls over crowd

By CATHERINE REESE
NEWTON

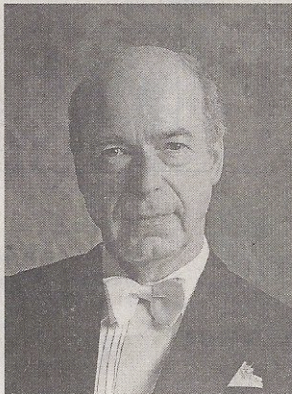
The Salt Lake Tribune

Beethoven's Fifth Symphony has become one of the biggest clichés in music, a warhorse that evokes almost as many smirks and sneers among cognoscenti as "Bolero" or the "1812" Overture. But like a master restorer wiping centuries of grime off a Velázquez painting, Matthias Bamert made the venerable symphony sound fresh and new in the Utah Symphony's season opener on Friday, reminding the capacity Abravanel Hall crowd why Beethoven's Fifth is one of the world's enduring masterpieces.

Bamert was considered a front-runner in the orchestra's music-director search more than a decade ago, and with Keith Lockhart's recent departure, the Swiss-born conductor presumably is a leading candidate again. Conducting with economical gestures and without a score, he led the orchestra in a taut performance brimming with life and color. Even if you'd heard this symphony a dozen times, Bamert offered a surprise around virtually every turn, bringing some new and interesting detail effortlessly to the fore.

The orchestra seemed especially alert in the slow movement, playing with near-perfect poise. Later, an exceptionally exciting *pianissimo* passage built into a magnificent sunrise as the third movement transitioned into the finale.

Bamert likewise showed a keen mastery of fine detail as well as a profound understanding of the big picture in Beethoven's Violin Concerto. The orchestra responded with delicacy in the slow movement and richness in the fast ones. Soloist Jennifer Frautschi was at her best in the slow movement; the steely focus of the first movement



Courtesy photo

Guest conductor Matthias Bamert leads the Utah Symphony in its season-opening concerts this weekend.

Utah Symphony

The orchestra opens its 70th season with invigorating performances of Beethoven favorites.

With » Conductor Matthias Bamert and violinist Jennifer Frautschi.

When » Reviewed Friday; repeats tonight at 8.

Where » Abravanel Hall, 123 W. South Temple, Salt Lake City.

Running time » Just over 2 hours, including intermission.

Tickets » \$25-\$60, available at 801-355-2787, www.arttix.org or the Utah Symphony ticket office at Abravanel Hall. Subscribers and those seeking student and group discounts should call 801-533-6683.

gave way to a warmer, richer tone, especially when she played on the lower strings.

The concert opened with a lively performance of Beethoven's overture to "The Creatures of Prometheus."

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