

Music of the ages

BY MELISSA PANTANO
The Battalion

Intimate Gatherings hosts American Radio Chamber Orchestra

A fan once described the essence of the American Radio Chamber Orchestra as that of a Texas-based chamber orchestra with a national presence and the promise of international reputation.

The American Radio Chamber Orchestra is a professional chamber orchestra consisting of 25 different instruments. The group's mission is to promote musically-oriented entertainment across the country.

The program, American Sounds, allows the orchestra to accomplish its goals as they tour, performing popular American pieces from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.

The American Radio Chamber Orchestra is the product of American conductor Mark Powell. Powell is a musician who says his self-proclaimed priority is to the "inner spirit of music" and "what [the music] makes you see and feel."

Powell's music is written from the standpoint of the "musical statement as the vehicle for personal enrichment and further listening."

Powell has had the honor of participating in many overseas competitions. In the summer of 1998, Powell was one of 30 conductors worldwide invited to the 12th International Nicolai Malko Competition in Copenhagen, Denmark. He also led performances with the Danish National Radio Symphony Orchestra and performed at the Korsholm Music Festival in Vaasa, Finland.

Powell led the American Radio Chamber Orchestra in its inaugural concert at the Festival Concert Hall at Round Top in December 1998. The American concert pianist and Festival founder James Dick called the performance one of the musical highlights of the season and immediately re-engaged the group for an appearance later this year.

American Sounds will also feature Katherine Ciesinski, a soloist who has been called "a singer of rare communicative presence and a musician of discrimination and intelligence" by the *New York Times*.

Ciesinski has appeared in two Metropolitan Opera productions, the Scottish Opera and the San Francisco Opera. She has also performed with many of the world's leading orchestras including the Cleveland, Minnesota, and Philadelphia Orchestras, the Symphonies of Chicago, Boston, San Francisco, Houston and Toronto, and in Europe with the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics.

The program for Thursday's performance includes such pieces as "Chester" by William Billings and "Adagio for Strings" by Samuel Barber. Among the most popular are "Appalachian Spring" by Aaron Copland and "After Long Silence" by Ned Rorem.

The orchestra will make its broadcast debut in the summer of 2000, with "See What You Hear," a radio program that will fulfill part of the original mission of the orchestra. It will give the listener an insider's view not only of the orchestra, but of its rehearsals, concerts, recording sessions and "daily life." The program will be broadcast over National Public Radio satellite system.

This concert will be presented as part of the Intimate Gatherings series brought to campus by MSC OPAS.

Through OPAS's Intimate Gatherings program, musicians participate in an open discussion with audience members following their performance. This forum will be hosted by Peter Lewen, the interim head of the Texas A&M Department of Performance Studies.

During the forum, the audience will have the opportunity to ask the performers about anything from the music itself to the inspiration of the Chamber Orchestra.

Emily Keappock, a member of MSC OPAS and a sophomore general studies major, said this is a truly unique experience.

The American Radio Chamber Orchestra is great because you get to hear music by American composers played by American musicians and get your questions answered by the performers themselves," Keappock said.

The American Radio Chamber Orchestra will be performing tonight at 8 at the George Bush Presidential Conference Center in Auditorium A.

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