

UPCOMING EDITOR'S PICK EVENTS

MAY 21 **Sean Kenney's Nature Connects Made With Lego Bricks**
Fri, 8:00 AM

MAY 21 **Pop! by Snowday**
Fri, 10:00 AM

MAY 21 **Moto Fest**
Fri, 12:00 PM

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ARTS ENTERTAINMENT > PERFORMING ARTS

Review: Conductor Nicholas McGegan returns to the Dallas Symphony, with Handel, Haydn and Mendelssohn

His last Dallas appearance, in January, got truncated when he tested positive for COVID-19.





Guest conductor Nicholas McGegan leads the Dallas Symphony Orchestra at Meyerson Symphony Center on May 20. (Allison Slomowitz / Special Contributor)



By [Scott Cantrell](#)

7:50 AM on May 21, 2021



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It was good to have guest conductor Nicholas McGegan back in front of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra — in happier circumstances than last time.

In January, the morning after conducting a marvelous all-Mozart concert here, McGegan tested positive for COVID-19. He had experienced no symptoms, but out of caution the DSO canceled repeat performances of the program. (The DSO has been testing all musicians daily.)

McGegan is best known as a lively, stylish conductor of baroque and classical-period music. On Thursday, at the Meyerson Symphony Center, he served up elegant, finely finished performances of 18th-century works by Handel and Haydn. The 19th-century offering, Mendelssohn's *Italian* Symphony, was less polished.

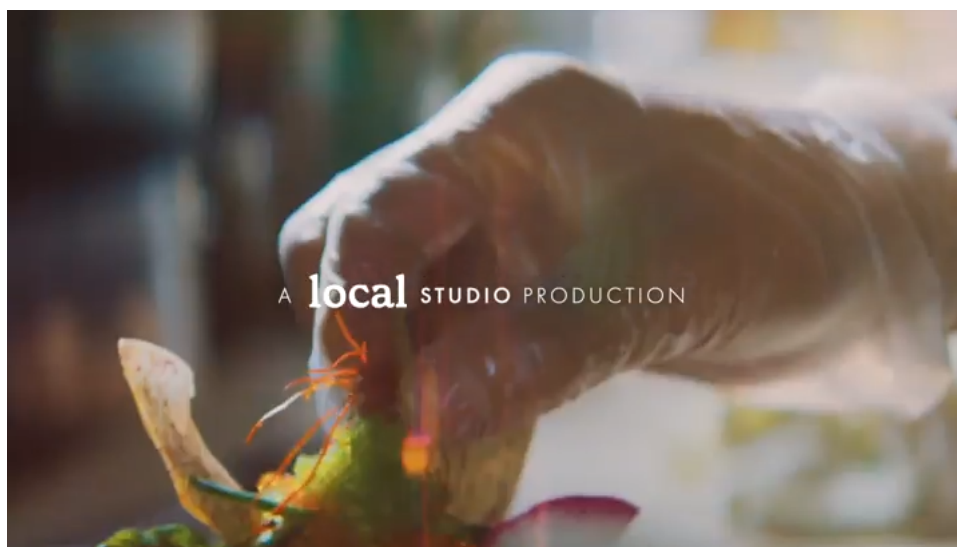
ADVERTISING

Haydn's Symphony No. 103 in E-flat major is full of surprises. They start with, of all things, an unaccompanied timpani alert that gained the symphony its *Drum Roll* nickname. Bassoons, cellos and basses then weave a spooky, meandering theme eventually joined by violins. Those opening gestures return at the movement's end, but in the meantime Haydn stirs up plenty of jollity.

The second-movement variations also begin mysteriously, gradually opening up with piquant counterpoints, which were beautifully dispensed by DSO wind players. The flashy violin solo was exquisitely dispatched by co-concertmaster Nathan Olson.

Properly taken at a thumping one beat per measure, the Minuet was more earthy than courtly. Alexander Kienle and Kevin Haseltine made fine horn contributions in the finale.

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BY VISIT UTAH



Both here and in Handel's Organ Concerto in F major, nicknamed *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, McGegan kept the music fresh and well sprung. Playing with

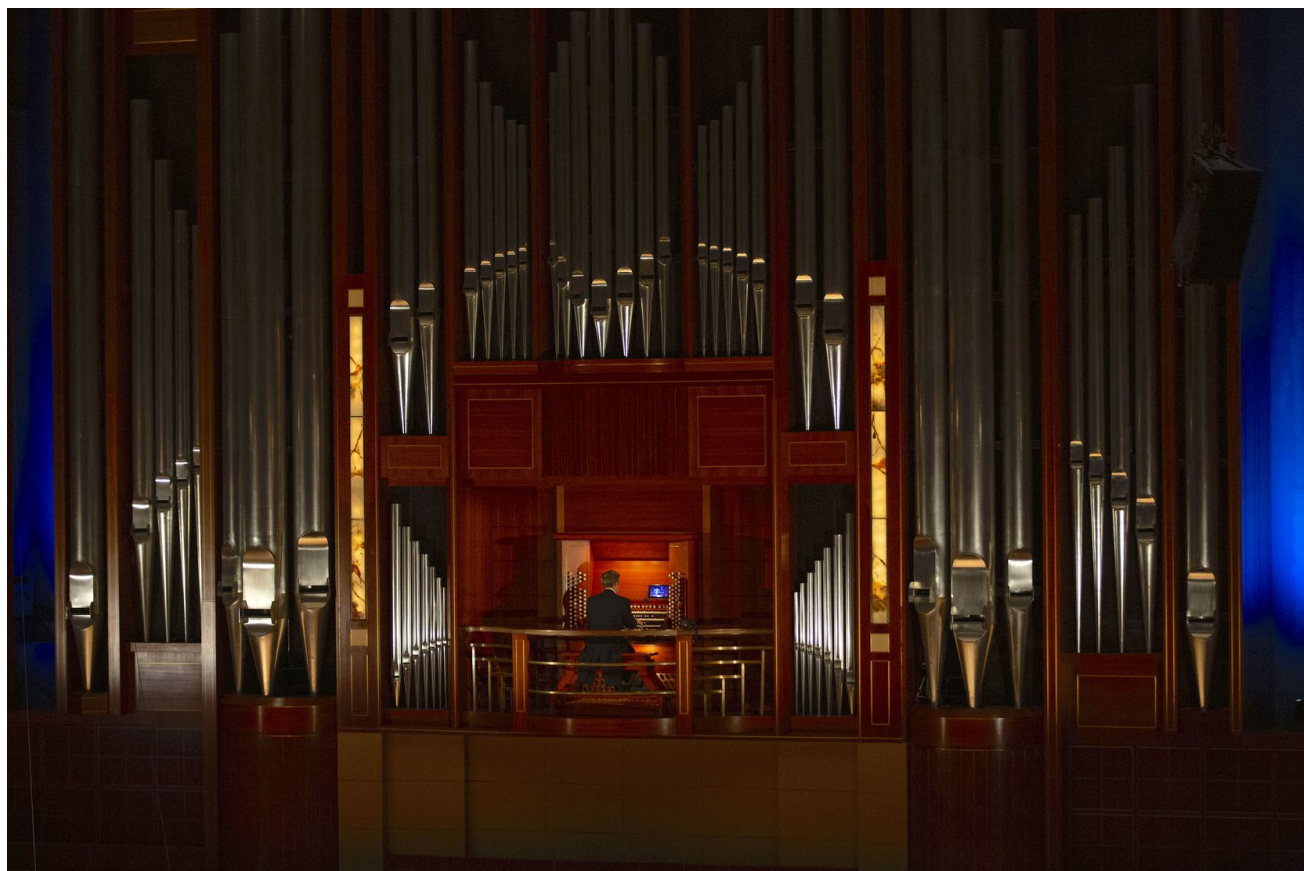
sparing vibrato, normal performance practice until early in the 20th century, the strings supplied sweet finesse.

The concerto's nickname was inspired by the "cuckoo" motifs in the organ part, although the nightingale is less obvious. Organist Bradley Hunter Welch helped by adding a few twitters from the nightingale stop — there is one — on the Meyerson's C.B. Fisk organ.

Handel composed his organ concertos for smallish English organs without pedals.

Welch's registrations were perfectly gauged to the modest orchestra of strings and oboes: from single principal and flute stops to bright, perky combinations.

Welch played with rhythmic élan and — no small trick at such a distance above and behind the orchestra — in perfect sync. He stylishly ornamented the sparsely notated organ part.



Bradley Hunter Welch plays the organ with Dallas Symphony Orchestra at Meyerson Symphony Center on May 20. (Allison Slomowitz / Special Contributor)

After such elegant performances, the Mendelssohn was energetic, but a little rougher around the edges. At least for me — and with musicians still socially distanced on the expanded Meyerson stage, in a very “live” acoustic — the outer movements felt less exciting than harried.

The second movement’s “walking” bass line makes the songlike phrases difficult to shape, but surely it could have yielded at least a *little* more than here. Kudos again, though, to Kienle and Haseltine for elegantly shaped horn contributions in the scherzo’s trio.

Details

Repeats at 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday at Meyerson Symphony Center, 2301 Flora St. \$29 to \$129. A video recording will be available for streaming June 1, for \$10. 214-849-4376, dallassymphony.org.



PERFORMING ARTS

The Dallas Opera will offer free concert of Broadway show tunes and operatic hits this week

The performance will take place in the Winspear Opera House.

BY TIM DIOVANNI



PERFORMING ARTS

Review: Sounds Modern spins off bold program of recent works with connections to Iran

The concert complemented a three-decade survey of art by Shirin Neshat at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth.

BY TIM DIOVANNI



ARCHITECTURE

The best new building in Dallas hits all the right notes

Architecture critic Mark Lamster says the Singing Hills Recreation Center is a welcome new icon for southern Dallas.

BY MARK LAMSTER



[Scott Cantrell](#), Special Contributor. Scott Cantrell was The News' classical music critic and continues to cover the beat as a freelance writer. Classical music coverage at The News is supported in part by a grant from the Rubin Institute for Music Criticism, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation. The News makes all editorial decisions.

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