

## Review: Martin Frost makes Mozart magic with St. Paul Chamber Orchestra

By Rob Hubbard Special to the Pioneer Press  
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Some classical pieces are such crowd pleasers that standing ovations are almost inevitable. But, if you're lucky, you'll sometimes encounter a performance of one of those works so full of imagination, spirit and technical skill that simply standing and applauding enthusiastically seems faint praise. If only a leaping or flying ovation were possible.

Such a performance was the interpretation of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto presented by soloist Martin Frost and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra at Stillwater's Trinity Lutheran Church on Thursday evening. Yes, it's one of the most beloved works in the classical repertoire, so it often inspires standing ovations purely out of affection. But the Swedish clarinetist had such a sweet, smooth caramel tone and full sound across the ample range of his extended "A" clarinet that this became an exceptional interpretation, complemented splendidly by the SPCO's expertise with Mozart.

And Frost was a delight to watch, a physically expressive player who moves about like a snake charmer or dancing pied piper. He was equally graceful when conducting an involving interpretation of fellow Scandinavian Edvard Grieg's "Holberg" Suite and an urgently energetic take on Beethoven's First Symphony. Throw in an adrenaline rush of an encore -- a breakneck-paced piece of klezmer -- and you have a marvelously satisfying concert that might be one of the season's most memorable.

Frost is fairly new to conducting, but the SPCO's excellent ensemble work and the smiles onstage made clear that the orchestra enjoyed working with him. What he lacks in precise stick technique, he makes up for in charisma. It was palpable on the Grieg, particularly in the melancholy Air and a finale in which concertmaster Steven Copes channeled a Norwegian folk fiddler. And Frost came into the Beethoven symphony with some strong interpretive ideas, judging from the well-executed shifts in dynamics and tempos. It felt like some chemistry was being established, so here's hoping that Frost and the SPCO will renew their acquaintance soon.

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**Who:** The St. Paul Chamber Orchestra with conductor and clarinetist Martin Frost

**What:** Works by Edvard Grieg, Mozart and Beethoven

**When and where:** 10:30 a.m. Friday and 8 p.m. Saturday, Ordway Center for the Performing Arts, 345 Washington St., St. Paul; 2 p.m. Sunday, Ted Mann Concert Hall, 2128 Fourth St. S., Minneapolis

**Tickets:** \$42-\$5, available at 651-291-1144 or [thespco.org](http://thespco.org)

**Capsule:** Frost brings fire to Mozart.