Mozart a good fit for Ravinia’s Martin

BY DOROTHY ANDRIES

Contributor

Operas in Ravinia’s Martin Theatre? Yes, and the festival’s music director James Conlon has been presenting them every other August since 2008.

In fact the 850-seat house, the only original building remaining from the 1904 park, is well suited for performances of the composer’s classical operas.

“The Martin provides the audience with an intimate experience,” Conlon said, when reached by telephone in Southern California, where he is music director of the Los Angeles Opera. “There is a direct contact between the audience and the performers.

Good size

“The Martin is much closer to the size of the theaters where Mozart’s operas were originally performed,” he continued. “And we have about 30 members of the Chicago Symphony playing—that’s close to the normal number in Mozart’s time.”

He has assembled a cast for “The Magic Flute” which includes popular baritone Nathan Gunn as Papageno, soprano Lei Xu as Papagena, soprano Ailyn Perez as Pamina and tenor Charles Castronovo as Tamino. Soprano Erika Miklos as the Queen of the Night, and bass Morris Robinson, the professional football player who became a view of human possibilities.”

Conlon’s Mozart project began in August of 2008, with the presentation of “The Abduction from the Seraglio” and “Don Giovanni,” followed by “Cosi fan tutte” and “Le Nozze di Figaro” in 2010.

“I can’t see how any conductor wouldn’t want to do both symphony and operatic conducting,” he said. “It’s only since World War II that there has been a tendency to separate the two, and it is