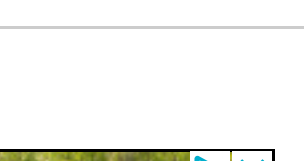


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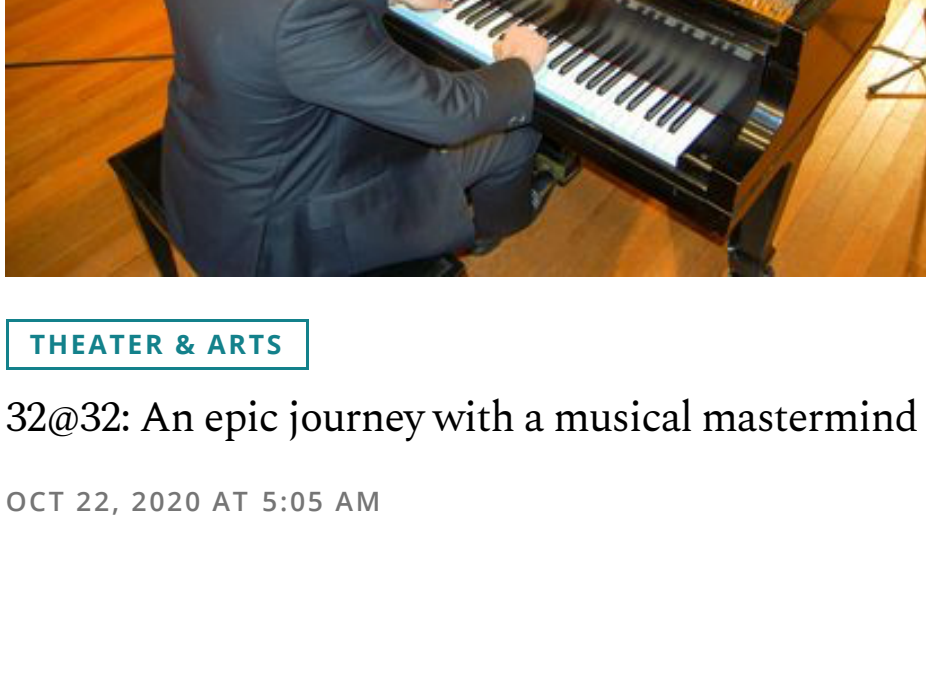
# At 2 outdoor concerts, different strokes for different folks | Reviews

By **MATTHEW J. PALM**  
 ORLANDO SENTINEL ARTS CRITIC | OCT 26, 2020 AT 5:00 AM



Music director Eric Jacobsen solos on cello (center) while Mauricio Céspedes Rivero conducts the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra in an Oct. 19 performance at Mead Botanical Garden in Winter Park. (Matthew J. Palm / Orlando Sentinel)

Call it a tale of two concerts. Two outdoor concerts. Two outdoor concerts, both in Winter Park. But for all the similarities there were significant differences in last week's performances by the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra and Bach Festival Society.



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To maintain physical distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic, arts groups have been viewing the great outdoors as performance space. The Orlando Philharmonic, which opened its season in Exploria Stadium, gave The Grove at Mead Botanical Garden a whirl. And the Bach Festival Society set up shop on the West Meadow of Central Park.

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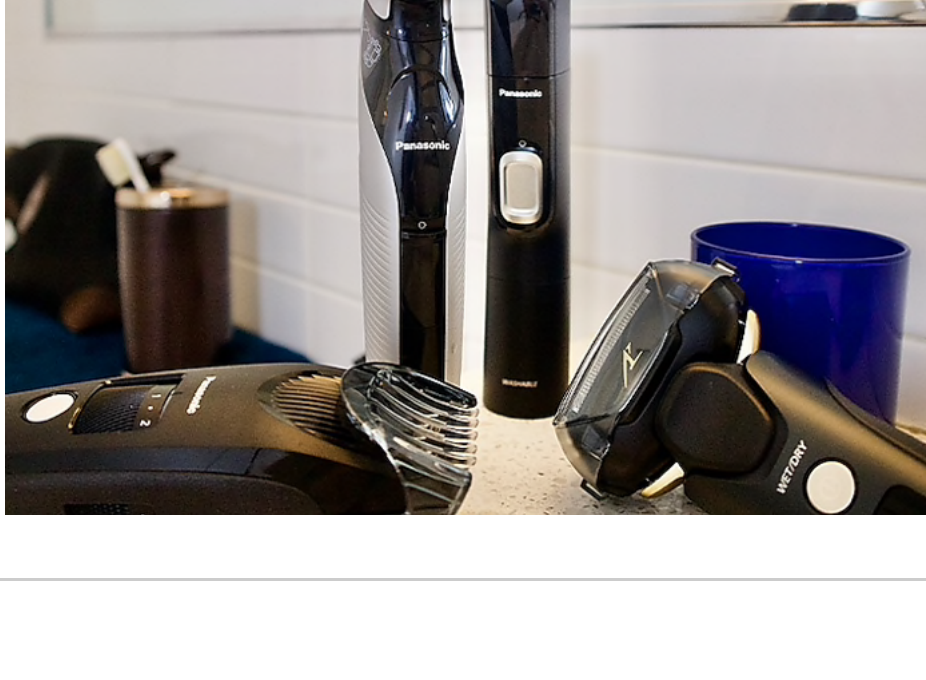
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The two events had very different vibes. The Philharmonic's felt more like a regular concert — just in a hall with very high humidity and an out-of-this-world ceiling. The Bach Festival Society's concert seemed more like a social hour, with musical accompaniment.

This difference was down to the audience, not the musicians and their efforts. On Sunday afternoon in Central Park, concertgoers all around me never stopped talking for the entire hour and a half. Some were singing along — to music that doesn't even have words.

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A physically distanced crowd listens to the Bach Festival Society orchestra, under the tent, play movie music on Sunday afternoon in the West Meadow of Central Park in Winter Park. (Matthew J. Palm / Orlando Sentinel)

Far be it from me to spoil anyone's fun, but I can't help thinking it's a shame when musicians of the Bach Festival Society's quality are relegated to background music. If that's what you're after, why not stay home with your records? (And yes, that's a deliberate grumpy old man reference).



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Grumpy old men (and women) were in their element for the Bach program, which was taken from famous movie scores — dubbed "this generation's classical music" by artistic director John Sinclair. In the first hour, only one selection was from the current century: themes from the "Harry Potter" franchise, which began in 2001.

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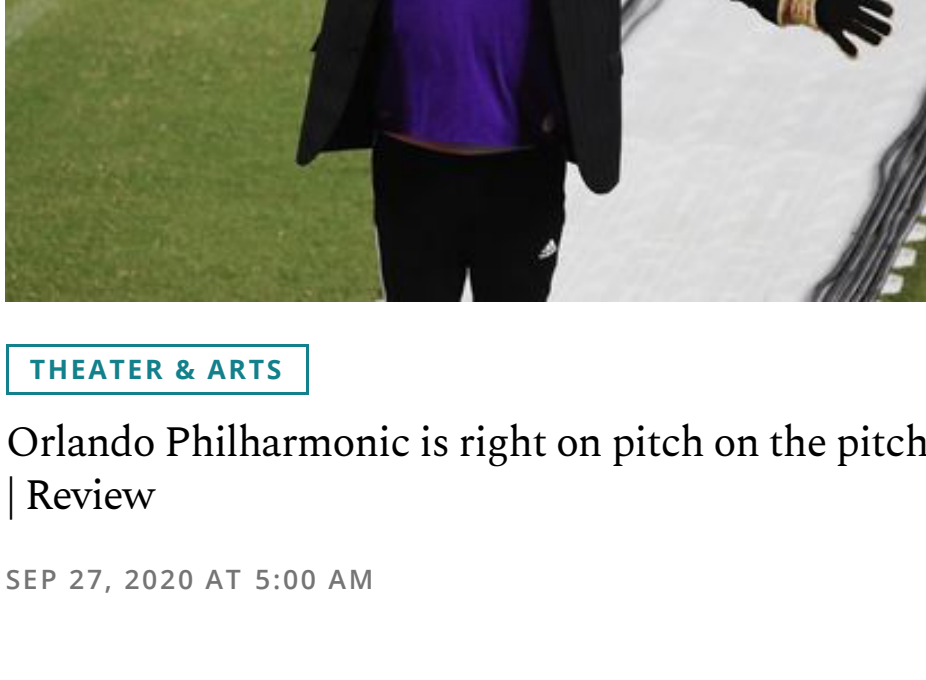
But the oldies were goodies, especially a slinky "Pink Panther" theme and driving "James Bond" medley with a soaring interlude of "For Your Eyes Only." Sheena Easton herself couldn't have topped it.

The Philharmonic, six days earlier, had taken a more traditional approach with its program. Guest soloist Lara St. John found gorgeous musicality all the way up to the crazy high notes on an orchestral arrangement of Beethoven's Kreutzer Sonata.



Orange and white flags in the ground were designed to help Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra patrons distance themselves during an Oct. 19 concert at The Grove at Mead Botanical Garden in Winter Park. (Matthew J. Palm / Orlando Sentinel)

In Anna Clyne's "Shorthand," which references that sonata, music director Eric Jacobsen picked up his cello and produced a rawness of feeling with the orchestra, conducted by Mauricio Céspedes Rivero.



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 SEP 27, 2020 AT 5:00 AM

Jacobsen conducted the remainder of the program, which included a gently soothing Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 1, with gorgeous dynamics. Even the faster segments sounded as though they were creating harmony with nature.

The Grove is a lovely concert spot. Hearing a hooting owl join the music was delightful — certainly beats inane human chitchat.

If there were a contest between the two organizations, I'd say the Bach Festival Society's table-numbering system was easier to navigate than the

Philharmonic's dizzying field of distance-measuring orange and white flags. But the Philharmonic had the scheduling edge with its post-sunset serenading; for most of the Bach movie program, I could feel myself baking in the Florida sun.

In any event, at both shows, music lovers were the winners.

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Matthew J. Palm CONTACT

Matthew J. Palm has watched hundreds of plays, ballets, symphony concerts, operas and other staged shows since first seeing "Les Miserables" as a teenager in Upstate New York. A graduate of Syracuse University, he is the Orlando Sentinel's arts writer and theater critic.

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