

Cantata Singers music director David Hoose recognized for work with Zelenka

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By **Al Gentile**

agentile@wickedlocal.com

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When conductor David Hoose of Lexington won an award for building awareness of the Czech baroque composer Jan Dismas Zelenka, he said it was more a testament of the Czech people than himself.

"It's remarkable that the Czech people value their cultural heritage so profoundly and seriously," Hoose, of Audubon Road, said. "It reflected more on them than it did on me. It says so much about what they believe is important in their culture."

On Dec. 5 at The Boston Public Library, Hoose was presented with the Silver Jan Masaryk Honorary Medal by the Czech Embassy for "raising the profile" of Zelenka through his work as music director of the Cantata Singers.

Zelenka, who lived from 1679 to 1745, was a composer who is relatively unknown in the United States. When Hoose came in contact with his music almost four years ago, he said its "convincing" quality, inventiveness, and breadth led him to include it each year in the Cantata Singers' repertoire.

"What I found was a music that was fresh, inventive, and incredibly skillful," Hoose said. "I thought there was something really special with this music."

In a press release by the Cantata Singers, Czech cultural attache Sarka Ponroy Vamberova thanked Hoose for his work.

"The Czech Embassy highly appreciates Davide Hoose's work, his passion for music, and devotion to present Czech baroque composer Jan Zelenka to the American Public. Former Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk, who was half-American and a pianist, would be extremely pleased with this year's choice."

One of the most important qualities of Zelenka's music, Hoose said, was how the surprises seemed to fit seamlessly in the rest of any given piece.

"By and large, the music is remarkably well put-together and very convincing," Hoose said. "No matter what the surprises are, they make sense to the ear."

A contemporary of Johann Sebastian Bach and a predecessor to Joseph Haydn, Hoose believes Zelenka embodied both a sense of past and future.

"Zelenka stands happily beside Bach's music, and by Haydn's music," Hoose said.

Underneath the award, Hoose said the mission to explore Zelenka taps into The Cantata Singer's deeper mission: to delve into music which deserves a bigger stage.

In 1964, the Cantata Singers was formed to explore Bach's cantatas, music which in many respects was not represented well in the United States.

"Our beginning to explore the music of Zelenka seemed analogous to the organization," Hoose said. "We made a concerted effort to expose ourselves and our audience to this wonderful voice."