

## REVIEW

The Kokomo Symphony hosted the 1996 Spring Youth Concert on May 5 at Grace United Methodist Church. This well attended concert featured three ensembles: the Kokomo Symphony Youth Orchestra, the Training Orchestra and the Beginning Strings Ensemble.

Moo Il Rhee, conductor and instructor of the Beginning Strings introduced the audience to his ensemble. As they tuned, one couldn't help but notice how bright and resonant the sanctuary's acoustics were. First was violinist Daniel Kelly performing an a cappella version of the traditional May Song. His half-size violin filled the hall to the delight of many. The whole ensemble followed, showcasing pizzicato and bowing techniques in a set of variations of Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star. Flash photos weren't discouraged and were fairly common as parents recorded their youngsters' mastery of the string fundamentals.

Following a brief intermission, the Training Orchestra took the stage. Conductor Edward Golightly opened his portion of the program with Match Maker from the popular Broadway musical "Fiddler On the Roof". The waltz was light on its feet, the high strings carrying the familiar tune. This made for a nice contrast to the Caponegro arrangement of Pachelbel's Cannon in D. The Cannon starts with the continuo in the low strings as contrapuntal variations and harmonies are built upon it in the violins and violas. The center piece of the Training Orchestra's performance was the Contre Danse en Rondeau from Mozart's Divertimento No. 8, K. 213. Obviously an orchestra favorite, it wanted to lift the heart away. Mr. Golightly adeptly kept a light hand on the reins without breaking the orchestra's high spirit.

Quite possibly the bravest man in the hall Sunday was Gregory Pritchard, Conductor of the Kokomo Symphony Youth Orchestra. Mr. Pritchard, who also serves as the Associate Conductor for the Kokomo Symphony and is a fine bassoonist in his own right, programmed an unusually aggressive set for this concert. The program shows a veritable Who's Who of composers from the 1750's to the 1970's.

Percussion and brass set the stage with bold and forceful statements in Aaron Copland's Fanfare for the Common Man. The Youth Orchestra's brass projected well. Especially notable were the trumpet opening and the all-senior trombone section near the end of the piece.

The high strings, playing quietly in their lower range showed a mature sensitivity and tenderness while accompanying bassoon soloist Adam Cruea in the haunting Berceuse from Igor Stravinski's The Firebird. The piece should paint a bleak and forboding mood on the soul; it

was highly effective. The light that pierced the gloom and led to the triumphant Finale was Debra Beatty's French horn. Her magnificent clear tone and flawless execution was the highlight of the concert. Symphonies in Kokomo are blessed with exceptionally strong horn sections and the Youth Symphony is no exception. Grace Bausom's harp added a wonderful presence to the low line, nicely complementing both pizzicato and arco cello passages.

Strings were showcased in the Allegro from Mozart's Eine Kleine Nachtmusik. Mr. Pritchard gave the baton to Jacob Chi, currently a conductor at Miami University. The audience found that a little bit of night music in the afternoon was nice.

The orchestra was stretched by posing contemporary composer Charles Ives' The Unanswered Question. Not truly a melodic work, it is interesting non the less.

Strings set a mood as unthinking Druids, while an antiphonal solo trumpet, played by Jeff Little, and the flute choir attempt to communicate. The trumpet asks a question over again; the flute choir becomes more and more agitated in its answer, as the trumpet is never satisfied. I doubt this was the ensembles favorite piece. Likely it was somewhat akin to Castor oil: it is good for you, but no one really likes it.

The concert ended the way all should: flashy, flamboyant, and loud. The Offenbach "Orpheus in the Underworld", well known for its Can-Can finale, fit the bill. Played enthusiastically, the brass section stood during the final chorus. Moments later the whole orchestra stood to acknowledge the applause earned for the hard work spent in preparation. Bravissimo!

Review by:

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