



Stephen Waarts, violinist

DAILY REPUBLIC

Symphony's 'Great Composers' concert another excellent performance

Kathleen Whalen | Daily Republic | March 30, 2012

There was at least one bright spot in last week's rainy and dreary weekend — the Solano Community Symphony Orchestra "Great Composers of the World" concerts in Fairfield and Vacaville. The first half featured the "Symphony No. 6 in K major, Op. 60" of Antonin Dvorak (1841-1904). His first symphony (but the sixth presented to the public) and less familiar to most than Dvorak's "New World" symphony, "Symphony No. 6" is typically Dvorak; colorful orchestration, seamless transitions between major and minor keys and with memorable melodies.

Music director and conductor Semyon Lohss and the Solano Community Symphony excel at this type of music and seem to enjoy the opportunity to elaborate and then pass phrases and melodic lines between sections. The Allegro ma non tanto drew us in immediately, as French horns and lower strings worked together in an inexorable increase in tension that was not released until, with a flourish, trumpets and trombones recapitulated the opening theme.

French horn principal Angelina Contreras was powerful yet restrained in several solo passages in the second movement, while Dan Scharlin's flute was alternately passionate and quietly mournful. In the third movement, Lohss' string section played with lively good humor until, with the triumphant return of the trombones and trumpets, the final movement ended with selfpossessed resolution.

The second half of the program featured guest artist Stephen Waarts in the familiar "Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 35," by Piotr Tchaikovsky (1840-1893). Even in a region rich in musical talent, young Waarts is an exceptional talent. Only 16, he has been studying in the Bachelor of music program at the famed Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia and has appeared with orchestras all over the world.

Though, surprisingly, it was not immediately successful with either performers or audiences, the Tchaikovsky violin concerto is now one of the best-loved and most-performed pieces in the violin repertoire. A virtuoso show-piece, the concerto requires confidence and expertise; Waarts displayed ample amounts of both. In the first movement, Waarts presented the main theme with lyrical simplicity, but very soon was engaged in pyrotechnical display. He played rapidly and with remarkably clean articulation, but with such consummate musicianship that he, and so we, never lost track of the thematic development in the movement.

Wendy Seres on clarinet and Linda Soares on bassoon and the rest of the very fine Solano Symphony woodwind section opened and closed the second movement, while Waarts soulful violin wove plaintively throughout.

In the finale, we saw a return of Waarts' agility and speed as he and the orchestra flew to a rousing finale. The audience leapt to their feet to give Waarts what is sure to be one of many standing ovations in what is sure to be a stellar career.

Lohss and the Solano Community Symphony Orchestra continues to offer audiences the chance to hear their friends and neighbors play the best of the classical music repertoire with skill and passion. We are indeed fortunate!