

A&E



David Palladino's Music Corner

New Jersey Symphony Rocks NJPAC With Bruckner

By DAVID PALLADINO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

NEWARK — The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra (NJSO) turned out a superb concert last Sunday afternoon under the direction of Polish conductor Maestro Stanislaw Skrowaczewski at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC).

The well-balanced repertoire included the light Mozart Concerto No. 19 in F major for Piano and Orchestra with guest pianist Peter Serkin and the formidable Symphony No. 9 in D minor by Anton Bruckner.

Maestro Skrowaczewski is one of the regular and pre-eminent guest conductors on the international scene. Debuting with his first American orchestra, the Cleveland Orchestra, in 1958, he has received the Gold Medal of the Mahler-Bruckner Society for his interpretations of the Bruckner symphonies. He has conducted all major American orchestras and offered a stellar interpretation of the 9th with the NJSO.

To begin, pianist Peter Serkin joined NJSO for the Mozart Concerto No. 19. Serkin is quite accomplished, performing not only with the world's major symphony orchestras but also with individuals such as Pablo Casals and Yo-Yo Ma among others. Serkin is famous for the ease in which he successfully conveys varying range, styles and nuances of different music eras.

His Mozart Concerto with NJSO was seemingly effortless. Backed by an extremely well sounding and solid orchestra, the performance was picture perfect. The Concerto No. 19 has an abundance of sweet scoring and the happiest and most lighthearted of Mozart's work in this particular genre.

Skrowaczewski immediately manifests his control through his continental European style of conducting — a style the likes of which we here in America, see much less often. His whole demeanor is one of a bygone era. With dark horn-rimmed glasses and gray hair flying, he kept the orchestra focused and tight through his physically mechanical, yet musically fluid interpretation.

His interpretation is somewhat similar in form to current NJSO music director Zdenek Macal, but without the total vagueness in developing musical ideas and phrases. The orchestra followed the conductor with responsiveness and intensity.

When generally compared to European orchestras, generating dramatic fluctuations in dynamic control is not a high point of an American orchestra. However, the string section exhibited great control and as a whole. It was tighter than ever — especially the upper strings — first and second violin sections.

Pianist Serkin, while musically jumping ahead of the orchestra in the first movement on several occasions, settled in and allowed the orchestra to blend in seamlessly for the rest of the performance. His interpretive and technical skills were quick and agile.

Conductor, soloist and orchestra were at total ease with the Mozart piece, which was smoothly performed, clean and interesting. A graceful piece, pleasing conductor, musicians and audience alike.

In direct, but refreshing contrast to the dainty Mozart, came the lumbering Bruckner. Another great composer, he offered the heavier side to the evening's German Austrian musical fare. Bruckner was an organist and, perhaps appropriately, his musical scoring has more of a sense of weight.

Throughout the rich tapestry of tension and uncertainty, we see brilliant flashes of blinding white light, which often pierce through in bright rays, highlighted by brass fanfares. The musical brilliance of Bruckner is not fully appreciated by most people, including musicians. While this was Bruckner's last symphony and one of his most mature works, it exemplifies the youthful vitality of his writing.

Unfortunately, Bruckner died before finishing the work. Although he tried desperately, he was unable, in his failing physical and mental health, to conceive of the massive conclusion needed to close the catharsis demanded by the earlier movements.

Scoring includes work for Wagner tuba, a hybrid instrument of baritone horn and French horn, invented by its namesake Richard Wagner, a most revered master of Bruckner.

The music has the exuberance of a teenager skulking and lumbering around looking for something to do. What generally happens to such an individual? He gets into trouble by breaking things, but often has flashes of brilliance through self-discovery. Perhaps one can hear this interpretation in the music.

Out of a happy-go-lucky and ignorant existence, the angst-ridden individual is then thrown into the world with all of its uncertainty and snares. This music, this person, his powers, are not yet understood nor appreciated by others, let alone himself.

I overheard a well-known timpanist holding forth on the work and complaining that it was generally too long, drawn out, thick and boring. The dilettante he was engaging agreed. Perhaps the lack of dramatic timpani writing, scarcity of timpani writing or lack of appreciation for such heavy Germanic music, led this person to this opinion. Perhaps some view Bruckner's work as immature, thick, clumsy and boisterous. The piece certainly does not lack punch however. And, it certainly isn't for the weakly constituted.

Eight French Horns, four Wagner tubas, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba make up the formidable brass section. Brass writing, particularly for horn, is extensive throughout. Principal Lucinda-Lewis and her superb horn section were powerful and steadfast.

Bone-chilling chords shrieking through the musical tapestry set the foundations shaking. The audience was so taken with the intensity of the music that even the regular candy wrapper people rustlers, murrers, coughers and hackers, as well as the snorers, were taken by the scruff of the neck and shaken into complete and utter attention.

The first movement closed with such a crashing yet abruptly ended mid-sentence chord, that the audience held their breaths for longer than a few moments. One could literally sense that some people were even scared. This is the desired effect. Something's wrong and something's broken. A teenager who is about to come into his own being — an unfinished work.

The adagio movement, considered by Bruckner to be the works best, shows the composer to be a true master of orchestration. Long chords demanded excellent tonal control by the orchestra, which was readily given. Prayer-like phrases were highlighted throughout and highlighted musical ideas quotations from German church "Amen" cadences.

Extreme kudos to the NJSO. A superb job by soloist, conductor and orchestra alike this past weekend at NJPAC.

The NJSO will offer a concert highlighting the music of Broadway this weekend and can be contacted at 1-800-ALLEGRO.

Mystery Author to Appear At Westfield Library Program

WESTFIELD — Award-winning mystery author Bartholomew Gill will present a special program on mysteries at the Westfield Memorial Library on Saturday, March 17, at 1 p.m.

Mr. Gill, who is best known for his Peter McGarr series, specializes in fiction with an Irish setting. He has penned 15 police procedurals featuring this Chief Superintendent of Detectives of the Irish Police.

He was nominated for an Edgar Award for Best Novel from the Mystery Writers of America in 1989 for "Death of a Joyce Scholar."

As part of the continuing series, "Spotlight on New Jersey Authors," Mr. Gill will explain his approach and methods for writing mysteries. This program is made possible in part from a HEART Grant from the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders.

The program is free and all are welcome to attend. To register for the program, please call the library at (908) 789-4090 or visit 550 East Broad Street.



DANCIN' FEET... The cast members of Westfield High School's production of *42nd Street* pose for a picture. They will offer their rendition this evening, March 8, Friday, March 9, and Saturday, March 10. The curtain time is 8 p.m. for all performances which will be held in the WHS auditorium at 550 Dorian Road. All tickets are reserved seating at \$8 prior to the show. Tickets sold at the door at \$10. To reserve tickets, please call (908) 789-4549 or contact a cast member.

Westfield High School Actors Will Give Spellbinding Tour to Audiences in 42nd Street Production

WESTFIELD — Before Broadway welcomes *42nd Street* to the Great White Way, 38 Westfield High School (WHS) students will offer their own rendition this evening, March 8, Friday, March 9, and Saturday, March 10. The curtain time is 8 p.m. for all performances which will be held in the

WHS auditorium at 550 Dorian Road.

The production will include memorable songs such as "Shadow Waltz," "You're Getting to Be a Habit with Me," "Getting Out of Town," "Sunny Side to Every Situation," "About a Quarter to Nine," and other familiar tunes such as, "We're In the Money,"

"Lullaby of Broadway," "Shuffle Off to Buffalo," and "42nd Street."

Written by Michael Stewart and Mark Bramble, *42nd Street* won the 1981 Tony Award for Best Musical.

Originally choreographed by Gower Champion, the WHS show is choreographed by Lorinda Haver. She has been nominated five times for the Paper Mill Playhouse Rising Star Award as Best Choreographer, taking home the award twice.

The cast includes Megan Rodd as Peggy Sawyer, Scott Brewster as Billy Lawlor and David Eisenberg as Julian March, the noted Broadway producer. Christine Piro is Dorothy Brock with Chad Tortorello and Tim Greenlaw as her love interests Abner Dillon and Pat Denning, respectively.

Tyler Patla is the dance director and the featured dancers include Samantha Black, Erica Cenci, Dakota Nave Hurtt, Kim Lam, Marian Pomann, Jennifer Rosenblum and Melanie Zacharides. Ian Federgreen and Dania Agiero play the writers Bert Barry and Maggie Jones.

The ensemble members are Lauren Baeder, Kelli Couzza, Bridget Fitzpatrick, Thomas Greene, Samantha Hooper-Hamersley, J.D. Hyman, Victoria Joyce, Ryan Leonard, Joshua Lerner, Josh Lieberman, Kristina Lucarelli, Chris Lynn, Jason Mesches, Katie Miller, Caroline Moore, Katherine Nicol, Betsy Paynter, Rosanne Palatucci, Mike Sherry, Martha Strickland, Tom Weingarten and Kelly Yang.

42nd Street will be directed by WHS Drama Teacher Joe Nierle. WHS Choral Director and Minister of Music at the First Baptist Church of Westfield Bill Matthews will be Musical Director. He holds 25 years of teaching experience in Westfield.

All tickets are reserved seating at \$8 prior to the show. Tickets sold at the door at \$10. To reserve tickets, please call (908) 789-4549 or contact a cast member.

Westfield Symphony Orchestra To Present An Evening Of Rising Star and Master

WESTFIELD — The roaring sound audiences will hear on the evening of Saturday, March 10, will not be March coming in like a lion, but rather the applause reacting to one "Rising Star" performer, Ryu Goto and one composer for the ages, Tchaikovsky.

Maestro David Wroe and the Westfield Symphony Orchestra (WSO) will present the fourth concert of its 2000-2001 season, Space Odyssey, at The Presbyterian Church in Westfield at 8 p.m.

Marking his second appearance with the WSO, violin prodigy Ryu Goto, the teenaged brother of renowned violinist Midori, will be playing Bruch's Violin Concerto. Ryu appeared with the WSO in 1999 and was critically acclaimed.

The monumental Symphony No. 6, "Pathétique," will also hold the audience spellbound on March 10. Known as the most dramatic of all Tchaikovsky's works, Pathétique is also one of the most celebrated symphonies in all Russian music. The term pathétique denotes a type of drama and theatrical music concerned with the emotions, particularly of suffering and sorrow. A pencilled note by the composer stated, "the ultimate essence of the plan of the Symphony is life."

Tchaikovsky wrote to his brother Anatol in February 1893, "It is hard for me to tear myself away from it. I believe it is being born as the best of my works." By August 1893, he wrote to his publisher, "I give you my word of honour that never in my life have I been so contented, so proud, so happy in the knowledge that I have written a good piece."

Rounding out the evening will be Scarmolin's Symphony Breve. Louis Scarmolin left a legacy of symphonies and other orchestral works that are now coming to the attention of major orchestras throughout the country.

A pre-concert lecture at 7 p.m. will enable listeners to learn more

about the evening's music.

Tickets may be purchased directly from WSO at (908) 232-9400, the Union County Arts Center Box Office at (732) 499-0441; or at one of the following WSO ticket outlets:



Ryu Goto

Martin Jewelers in Cranford, Beautiful Things in Scotch Plains, Lancaster, Ltd. and The Town Book Store in Westfield, and Bayberry in Mountainside.

Ticket prices are \$25 per adult, \$22 per senior citizen, and \$15 per student.

The following restaurants are offering a special 10 percent discount for WSO concert ticket holders on a pre-concert 5-6 p.m. seating: Chez Catherine, Elm Street Café, Galata's, Kotobuki, and Northside Trattoria. Patrons must show their tickets to qualify for the discount. Reservations are highly recommended.

This evening of music holds tremendous appeal to families with children who are already playing an instrument, or those who may wish to in the future. To perform with the WSO and Maestro Wroe, the March 10 performance by Ryu Goto will support what parents advise, "Practice, Practice, Practice!"

Oratorio Singers to Premiere Newest Piece on March 18

WESTFIELD — On Sunday, March 18, at 3 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church in Westfield, the Oratorio Singers and orchestra, under the direction of Trent Johnson, will present a varied concert of choral works, along with an appearance by the noted soprano Phyllis Bryn-Julson.

The choir celebrates its 21st year and presents the Te Deum laudamus of Wolfgang Mozart, the Missa Brevis of Zoltán Kodály, four songs from Arriettes Oubliées by Debussy, sung by Phyllis Bryn-Julson, and a world premiere, The Paschal Lamb, by Music Director, Trent Johnson.

Mozart's Te Deum laudamus is an early work from the pen of the precocious composer. It is full of youthful vigor and energy with songs of praise and adoration. Kodály's Missa Brevis, written in 1944, is a 20th century masterpiece full of attractive harmonies and uses as its text the Latin Mass.

Joining the Oratorio Singers will be the noted soprano, Phyllis Bryn-Julson. Ms. Bryn-Julson has become known for her lustrous voice, perfect pitch, three octave range as well as her collaboration with many noted 20th century composers, among them Boulez, Carter, George Walker, Ligeti, Messiaen and Lutoslawski. She has sung with orchestras around the world, among them the orchestras of Los Angeles, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco,

New York, Berlin, Washington D.C., Amsterdam, Munich and Stockholm.

Ms. Bryn-Julson will sing an orchestrated version of four songs from Arriettes Oubliées of Claude Debussy. This is the first performance of these works in this orchestrated version by Pulitzer-Prize winning composer, Wayne Petersen.

Also on the program will be the world premiere of The Paschal Lamb, written by Music Director and conductor Trent Johnson, composed especially for Ms. Bryn-Julson and the Oratorio Singers. The work tells the story of Lent from its paths and suffering to the triumph and exhilaration of the resurrection.

Mr. Johnson is a graduate of the Peabody Institute and The Juilliard School, and recently composed a Trumpet Concerto, premiered last spring with trumpeter Don Batchelder. In addition, he has written a Flute Sonata and works for String Orchestra, piano, organ and chorus.

General admission tickets for this event may be purchased for \$15, with student/senior citizen tickets at \$10. They may be purchased at Lancaster's, Ltd. in Westfield or the Scotch Plains Music Center.

For more information, please call (908) 233-4211. This arts program is made possible in part by a HEART Grant (History, Education, Arts - Reaching Thousands) from the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders.

Shubert

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

The Victoria Theater of NJPAC, which was constructed primarily for plays and spoken drama, provided the perfect intimate setting for this type of educational concert. While acoustics were not ideal, the full carpeting absorbing much of the reverberation effects created by the orchestra and had a sort of deadening effect on orchestral sound.

The two string bassists performed well, but string bass sound, as usual, was particularly hampered by the lack of a solid "sounding board" behind them.

Thus, NJPAC might consider providing a musical shell for orchestras, small ensembles or soloists choosing to perform in this arena. Such a shell is essential, and the best of which would include a shell that has no sound escapes into the rear far nether-reaches of the proscenium.

Even lower end bass sound in the larger Prudential Hall is hampered by the "sound escape gaps" in the 12 piece "mobile" (euphemism for multi-purpose) shell.

Furthermore, in a perfect world, risers would also be provided, primarily for woodwinds, even in such smaller ensemble pieces. In any case, the silver lining came with the fact that the stellar intonation and technical accuracy from the orchestra was even more noticeable.

Through Maestro Maull's gift of passion for sharing and teaching, the audience and musicians most certainly gained a new perspective on the work of this great composer, Franz Peter Schubert. The vast and deep well of talent in New Jersey still has yet to be fully realized - but I promise it will.

The next concert of the Philharmonic of New Jersey will offer an all-Beethoven concert including the Fidelio Overture, the Piano Concerto No. 5 "Emperor" featuring pianist Lee Luvisi and the Symphony No. 7 on Saturday May 6 at 3 p.m. in the larger Prudential Hall of the New Jersey Performing Arts Center.

For ticket information, please call the New Jersey Philharmonic Orchestra at (908) 226-7300 or 1-888-GO-NJPAC.

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POPCORN™

3000 Miles to Graceland Ain't Nothing But a Hound Dog



By Michael S. Goldberger

One Popcorn, Poor • Two Popcorns, Fair • Three Popcorns, Good • Four Popcorns, Excellent

1 & 1/2 popcorns

It'll take a lot more than the ruminations of a film critic to understand the insane violence that comprises *3000 Miles To Graceland*. A team of psychiatrists would be much more appropriate. For if ever there were a film that needed to undergo analysis, this is it. And so I'm not sure whether to review this movie or simply have it committed.

"More bloody than *Rambo!* More killings and explosions than *Terminator* and *Terminator II* combined." That's how the Madison Avenue crowd would sell this movie if they could. But they can't. At least not yet. Society hasn't quite decided if it's headed for the nihilism of *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) or the utopian perfection of *Yellow Submarine's Pepperland*.

So just think of *3000 Miles to Graceland* as an action-adventure. An action-adventure where practically everyone in the cast is killed. A mortician's wildest dream come true.

The setting of cinematic violence to music, a dubious craft honed by would-be directors on the proving grounds of MTV, has become a controversial art form unto itself. But there's nothing uncertain about filmmaker Demian Lichtenstein's non-stop barrage of injury and ill-will. And with practically everything blowing up at least once, the former music video director coordinates it all with a visually cacophonous light show.

Arogant, self-indulgent, anti-intellectual and flaunting the cheap thrills of bad taste and behavior, his picture represents the punk rock of moviemaking.

Holding court at center stage of this psychotic symphony about a Vegas casino robbery during an Elvis impersonator convention are Kevin Costner and Kurt Russell. Ex jail buddies, thieves, desperadoes and gosh knows what else, they are opposite sides of the same counterfeit coin. Neither of these two reprobates is developed beyond comic-book dimensions.

However, it is soon implied in word and deed that Russell's bad guy is actually kind of nice, for a criminal that is. He's Michael, and whilst involved in the opening heist scene, odds are he kind of feels bad about the innocent bystanders who were killed. Or maybe not.

Costner's villain, on the other hand, is a malefactor of another color. A vast departure from his parade of messianic do-gooders, Murphy is a ne'er-do-well

to the bone. At the very least deranged, he's the sort of sadist who makes it a point to bag his quota of victims at every opportunity.

And thus ordinarily he'd be no different than your run-of-the-mill cinema sociopath. You know the type. Always killing and cackling, cackling and killing. But in a would-be story hook fashioned by director Lichtenstein and co-author Richard Recco, the myth is floated that Costner's character is the illegitimate son of Elvis Presley. But what of it?

Unfortunately, while this half-baked idea piques the imagination, it never goes anywhere. Not even as a metaphor. Like the painfully slow plot exposition, the fleshing out of Costner and Russell's Cain and Abel anti-heroes is jagged and wobbly at best.

And about the same can be said for Courtney Cox's moderately amusing turn as trailer trash beauty Cybil Waingrow. She's Michael's part-time love interest and one-third of the treasure-hunting quinnella that emerges after greed undoes the original crew and its plans.

Voila, it's a road movie, with each of the three principal players trying to out-smart the other two. But there's a rather funny dynamic at work here.

For despite all the cutting-edge pretense, the cataclysmic pyrotechnics and the haughty impudence that *3000 Miles To Graceland* surrounds itself with, in the end this bad boy of a film cops out and resorts to the simplest of tried and true story lines. And in a plot ploy which should garner the chutzpah of the year award, director Lichtenstein even has Cybil's larcenous son, Jesse (David Kaye), wrestle with whether or not to bond with Michael.

Sort of a psychotropic drug version of *Shane* (1953).

This would be bad enough if it were presented in an economical 90 minutes. Yet adding insult to injury, *3000 Miles To Graceland* drones on for an unconscionable two hours and five minutes.

Hence, not only does it ignore all the rules of good filmmaking. It also disregards Elvis himself, who musically inspired, "Don't be cruel."

3000 Miles To Graceland, rated R, is a Warner Brothers' Pictures release directed by Demian Lichtenstein and stars Kevin Costner, Kurt Russell and Courtney Cox. Running time: 125 minutes.

PUBLIC NOTICE	PUBLIC NOTICE
SCOTCH PLAINS-FANWOOD BOARD OF EDUCATION	
NOTICE OF MEETINGS (In Compliance with OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT - Chapter 231)	
ADDENDUM	
TYPE OF MEETING:	Public Hearing on 2001-02 School Budget
DATE OF MEETING:	Monday, March 26, 2001
LOCATION:	Administration Building Evergreen Avenue & Cedar Street Scotch Plains, New Jersey 07076
TIME:	8:00 p.m.
PURPOSE OF MEETING:	The Board will meet to hold a public hearing on the 2001-02 school budget.
ACTION TO BE TAKEN:	Action will be taken.
DATE OF NOTIFICATION:	February 28, 2001
1 T - 3/8/01, The Times	Fee: \$30.60
PUBLIC NOTICE	PUBLIC NOTICE
SCOTCH PLAINS-FANWOOD BOARD OF EDUCATION	
NOTICE OF MEETINGS (In Compliance with OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT - Chapter 231)	
REVISION TO REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETINGS	
TYPE OF MEETING:	Open Agenda Meeting
DATE OF MEETING:	March 15, 2001 (originally scheduled on March 8, 2001)
LOCATION:	Administration Building Evergreen Avenue & Cedar Street Scotch Plains, New Jersey 07076
TIME:	7:30 p.m. (Executive Session) 8:00 p.m. (Public Meeting)
PURPOSE OF MEETING:	The Board will meet to set the agenda for the Regular Public Meeting on March 22, 2001.
ACTION TO BE TAKEN:	Action will be taken.
DATE OF NOTIFICATION:	March 1, 2001
1 T - 3/8/01, The Times	Fee: \$33.66