

Oratorio Singers Present Annual Concert

Editors Note: The following was submitted by Paul Mack Somers for the Oratorio Singers.

WESTFIELD — “A wall of sound!” is how this music was described to this writer before, during, and after the concert. It was certainly an apt description, for at the top of the wall, quite literally, was the Oratorio Singers, a well-trained 57 voice chorus led by music director, Trent Johnson. At more or less the same level was the large Aeolian-Skinner pipe organ played by Yang-Hee Song. But these are a standard view for the audience at the Oratorio Singers’ annual concert.

What was most striking as one entered was the mere ten chairs stretching in single row across the front of the stage with some percussion to the right and a harp tucked away waiting to join in for the second half. In all previous years this space would have been filled with an orchestra ranging in size from the baroque to the romantic. Here, instead, were what appeared to be minimal numbers. But when they were filled with three trumpets, three horns, three trombones, tuba, timpani, and two more percussionists covering such instruments as Glockenspiel and both crash and suspended cymbals, all top-rank professionals, the “wall of sound” was complete.

Its sheer sonic power was felt immediately as the audience joined the chorus in singing Ralph Vaughan Williams’ setting of the old hymn-tune we call “Old 100th” with the text “All people who on earth do dwell.” Everyone who knew the tune — only a very few did not — sang the first stanza with a will, though fewer sang for the less familiar stanzas two and five. The lyrical trumpet descant in the soft third stanza was played with clear and musical phrasing.

Audience participation out of the way, the full ensemble got down to real work in Mack Willberg’s *Jubilata Deo*. Even within the changing meters the ensemble was crisp and the choral attacks clean. The tenors, the smallest section, did a sterling job with a sec-

tional solo. In Wilberg’s *Laudate Dominum*, which closed the first half, every section proved exemplary in solo and ensemble as the passage beginning with “Laudate eum in sono tubae” builds in complexity and intensity. With all that brass and percussion rising to a climax with the chorus, one had the same sense of irresistible procession one finds in Respighi’s “Pines of the Apennines.”

Between the two Wilberg pieces, Giovanni Gabrieli, the turn-of-the-17th century father of great chorus, organ, and brass composing, was represented. It was he who gained a reputation for his antiphonal composing in which multiple ensembles responded to each other across the spaces of the Basilica di San Marco in Venice. On this occasion two of the works — the all brass *Canzona Prima à 5* and the full ensemble’s *Jubilata Deo* — are not considered to be antiphonal. But in this performance with the players spread all across the stage, and with Gabrieli’s crisp compositional style, it was de facto antiphonal. The choral and brass imitation passages were transparent and geographical as the motives aurally moved around the stage.

The *Canzoni Septimi Toni à 8*, on the other hand, is a truly antiphonal work with the brass and organ on this occasion as the opposing forces. But because this made the spatial relationship of front (brass) against back behind the altar (organ) instead of side to side, it sounded the least antiphonal. This writer had only ever before heard this canon with two brass choirs left and right. Perhaps if the antiphonal organ in the rear of the church had been used as the second “ensemble,” it would have been more effective.

The second part of this release will appear in next week’s edition and cover the second half of the concert.

See it all on the Web!
www.goleader.com

POPCORN

The Incredible Burt Wonderstone A Conjured Taste

2 and 1/2 popcorns

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

By MICHAEL S. GOLDBERGER
Film Critic

Point of disclosure: For reasons both nostalgic and personal, I probably like director Don Scardino’s *The Incredible Burt Wonderstone* more than most normal folks will. Having had a childhood friend who aspired to magical greatness made it much more appreciable. You see, I knew Lew Wymisner when he was just becoming the Great Loudini.

Heck...once, just as our friendship was germinating, I even helped. Interviewing me on the B-ball court for my one and only stint as a magician’s assistant, he asked if I had a sport coat. Responding in a style reminiscent of Jack Nicholson’s retort in *Easy Rider* (1969) when Peter Fonda inquires if he has a helmet, I answered, “I’ve got a doozie!”

In hound’s-tooth jacket, I got a peek behind the curtain, handed the budding magician a rabbit or two, and earned \$5. Thus, as this film details the nascent stage of what one day will become the record-breaking, headlining Vegas act of Burt Wonderstone and Anton Marvelton, a memory about the grand aspirations and fantasies of childhood was jogged.

Pity is, Steve Carrel’s Burt Wonderstone is now bored and jaded. For all his fame and fortune, the thrill is gone. He and Anton, portrayed by Steve Buscemi, simply phone it in every night, sniping at each other offstage in resentment of the rut they’ve dug. Worse yet, they no longer feel the bond of friendship that has been the hallmark of their act.

The audience, once always full and now not so much, can sense it. And, as if that didn’t augur bad enough for their showbiz future, a perfect storm has arrived on the Strip in the arrogantly intrusive persona of street magician Steve Gray, played with unsettling vitriol by Jim Carrey. The handwriting is on the wall. Of course Burt’s hubris blinds his view.

But the scene is perfectly clear to Doug Munny (James Gandolfini), the owner of the Bally Hotel who only has the bottom line at heart. Push comes to shove and Presto-change-o, the exposition about a magician who has lost the joy and spark that led him to his craft turns into a tale of realization, comeuppance and a struggle for redemption.

While hardly ever sidesplitting, *The Incredible Burt Wonderstone* does provide a smattering, if not a steady stream, of laughs to augment what essentially is the proverbial entertainment industry saga. You know, how the mighty fall, the umpteenth variation on *A Star is Born*, but with doves and the other

accouterments of things prestidigitational.

Still, the screenplay by a gaggle of scribes supplies fairly apt material and conjures some decent bits of shtick. Plus, the zany, self-absorbed, single-mindedness Carrel classically imbues his characters with, combined with Buscemi’s oddball characterization and Mr. Carrey’s abashing loose cannon, renders the sum of the amusement greater than its parts.

Playing the sorcerer’s apprentice without benefit of a black and white hound’s-tooth sports jacket, but making up for it with grace of form, face and manner is Olivia Wilde. Catalyst and love interest, she is Jane, even if Burt persists in calling her Nicole, just as he did all her routinely fired predecessors. But that’s OK. Unspoiled, Jane has a dream.

Also full of motivation, but more resembling a nightmare, at least to Burt, is Jim Carrey’s haughty illusionist. Representing that wing of hocus-pocus oft considered déclassé by more traditional magicians, he shocks and awes his sidewalk patrons with repulsive acts of self-affliction. But then, don’t people slow down to ogle a car wreck?

Urging Burt to match the evil competition’s death-defying feats, Anton suggests they reference the notebook of conjurations they penned as kids, and maybe in the process restore the magic in their magic. Buscemi, like Messrs. Carrel and Carrey, possesses in his bag of tricks an intrinsic ploy: His face alone can cause us a chuckle, if not a cackle.

But the film’s best supporting stint, while hardly more than a cameo, is artfully sketched by Alan Arkin. Lo and behold, discovered living out his days in a retirement home after inexplicably walking away from the world of abracadabra, is the great Rance Holloway. Gee...Burt owned his magic kit as a kid. Why, it’s the very reason he became a magician.

While Mr. Arkin’s comic alchemy adds warmth and whimsy to the doings, the good-natured movie just doesn’t have that novel or gut-busting twist up its sleeve. Hence, folks without a special interest in the world of incantations and wizardry are advised to wait until *The Incredible Burt Wonderstone* materializes through the magic of television.

...
The Incredible Burt Wonderstone, rated PG-13, is a Warner Bros. Pictures release directed by Don Scardino and stars Steve Carrel, Jim Carrey and Olivia Wilde. Running time: 100 minutes



BAND CONCERT...Students perform at their fourth grade Band Concert, held at Wilson Elementary School in Westfield on February 21.

SP-F Jazz Band Festival to Spotlight Young Musicians

SCOTCH PLAINS — The 16th Annual Jazz Band Festival will be held on Friday, April 5, at the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School. Young jazz musicians from several central New Jersey bands will perform starting at 5:30 p.m. Admission is \$7 for adults, \$5 for students and senior citizens. There will also be food available for purchase. The Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School is located at 667 Westfield Road in Scotch Plains.

The Festival features guest bands from New Jersey high schools including Westfield, J.P. Stevens, Bridgewater-Raritan and others. Also featured in the evening’s line up are three jazz band ensembles from the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School: Jazz Lab, SPF Jazz and the Moonglowers.

For more information, visit the Music Boosters website at www.spfk12.org/domain/66.

Masterwork Chorus Hosts Cäcilien Chor in ‘Voices Unite’

SUMMIT — The Masterwork Chorus and Frankfurt Germany’s Cäcilien Chor will present “Voices Unite,” a program of choral music featuring Bernstein’s *Chichester Psalms*, Rheinberger’s *Mass in a Minor*, and Britten’s *Rejoice in the Lamb*. The performance will take place at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 25, at the Calvary Episcopal Church in Summit. Tickets are \$30 and are available at www.masterwork.org.

Under the baton of Music Director Andrew McGill, The Masterwork Chorus is widely recognized for its dramatic interpretations of “masterworks” from all periods. The Chorus has sung at Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center and the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC as well as on the Perelman Stage at Carnegie Hall for its annual performance of Handel’s *Messiah*.

The Cäcilien-Chor was founded in 1818 in Frankfurt, Germany. Their demanding program of works covers choral music from the sixteenth century to the present. Felix Mendelssohn

conducted the chorus in 1829, and dedicated his oratorio “Paulus” to Cäcilien-Chor. They have also sung under the baton of many world famous conductors, including Wilhelm Furtwängler, Sir George Solti, Lorin Maazel, Kurt Mazur and Christian Zacharias. Director since 1988, Christian Kabitz has greatly enriched the musical experience enjoyed by members and supporters alike.

The Voices Unite concerts would not have been possible without the generous support of Environmental News Network, Lauterback Marketing, Makrod Investment Associates, Pavese-McCormick Agency, Inc., Savory Systems International, Inc., Summit Financial Resources, Inc., and Wagner and Associates, LLC. Funding has also been made possible in part the Frank and Lydia Bergen Foundation.

100 Saints

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is has proven both a challenge and a reward for Mrs. Painter. “I am no longer her mother or her acting teacher or her director. In this play we are two actors on the same plain.”

The play, *100 Saints You Should Know*, that will run weekends at the Edison Valley Playhouse on Oak Tree Road in Edison from Friday, March 29, through Saturday, April 13, centers on a conflicted priest (Paul Zeller) who leaves his congregation to go home to soul-search and be with his mother (Noreen Farley).

The drama extends to the strife between a cleaning lady (Beth Painter) and her difficult 16-year-old daughter (Hannah Painter), as well as a grocery delivery boy (Aaron Black) grappling with his sexuality. All of the five characters are seeking both spiritual and earthly bonds.

For reservations for seats in the intimate theatre, call (908) 755-4654 or visit www.EVPlayhouse.com. The play runs Friday and Saturday nights at 8 p.m. as well as a 2 p.m. Sunday, April 7, matinee.



YOUNG ARTIST...McKinley student, Alexandra Brennan, holds her art work titled “Abstraction,” which was selected to be displayed at the Department of Education building in Trenton. Alexandra is the youngest of 13 artists chosen from over 50 candidates throughout the state. Alexandra is pictured with Art Teacher, Alison Hooper-Korkuch.

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Farmhouse Store Donates to Help Freehold Family

WESTFIELD — The Farmhouse Store located on East Broad Street in Westfield recently hosted design and TV personalities George Oliphant and Courtney Cachet as they filmed a segment of NBC’s “George to the Rescue.”

On the program, host George Oliphant teams up with design and construction experts to rescue a family or community in need of home improvements.

For the episode filmed at The Farmhouse Store, a family from Freehold is helped to finish home renovations by Mr. Oliphant’s program. The husband, a firefighter and 9/11 first responder, is unable to complete work started on the family home due to a serious back injury that he suffered.

The Farmhouse Store donated upholstered furniture, tables, rugs, art, and decorative accessories from their extensive inventory to finish a basement family room for the deserving family. Ms. Cachet approached owners Ed Menapace and Bill Curtis about participating in the program. The owners and store staff designers worked with Ms. Cachet to select items for furnishing and accessorizing the room.

The “George to the Rescue” episode is scheduled to air on Saturday, April 20, at 9 a.m. on NBC New York. A condensed version of the episode will run as part of LX TV’s Open House program, which airs on NBC on Sunday mornings at 8:30 a.m. It will also run in the future on the Cozi TV network in syndication.



GENEROUS DONATION...The Farmhouse Store located on East Broad Street in Westfield recently hosted design and TV personalities George Oliphant and Courtney Cachet as they filmed a segment of NBC’s “George to the Rescue.” Pictured, left to right, are: Bill Curtis, Ms. Cachet, Ed Menapace and Mr. Oliphant.

Plagge Named Director of NJWA Rockin’ Jazz Band

WESTFIELD — Dr. Ted Schlosberg, Founder and Executive Director of the New Jersey Workshop for the Arts (NJWA), has announced that he has turned over his baton as director of the NJWA Rockin’ Jazz Band to Brian Plagge.

Mr. Plagge is a graduate of The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) with a Bachelor of Arts in Music Education, concentration in Trumpet. While at TCNJ, Mr. Plagge was a member of the Wind Ensemble, Orchestra, Brass Quintet, Brass Ensemble and the Jazz Ensemble, where he was a featured soloist and additionally a member of the New Jersey Intercollegiate Jazz Ensemble, which is a collection of the state’s top college-level jazz musicians.

Mr. Plagge’s performance credentials include appearances in a number of musical pit orchestras including *Damn Yankees*, *Cabaret*, *Les Miserables*, *42nd Street*, *West Side Story* and others. He is also a current member of the Princeton Brass Band,

which performs upwards of seven times a year and makes perennial appearances at the North American Brass Band Association Championships.

A staff member at Oratory Preparatory School in Summit, Mr. Plagge’s responsibilities include teaching the general music classes, the band program and a senior music elective.

He stated that he “is very excited to have the opportunity to direct the NJWA Rockin’ Jazz Band and is looking forward to many exciting performances!”

The NJWA Rockin’ Jazz Band is available for performances at street fairs, community events, private parties and special occasions. Musicians interested in joining the band should call Dr. Schlosberg at (908) 789-9696 ext. 17.

For additional information on the band or any program of the NJWA, call (908) 789-9696, visit the studios at 150-152 East Broad Street, Westfield, or log on to www.njworkshopforthearts.com.



Brian Plagge

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