

Arts & Entertainment

Community Concert Band Presents Spring Concert Tonight at EIS



SONIC SPECTACULAR...Trent Johnson, the conductor of the Oratorio Singers of Westfield, leads the musicians and vocalists at the 39th annual concert, entitled *Sonic Spectacular*, held Sunday at the First United Methodist Church.

Oratorio Singers' *Sonic Spectacular* 'Leaves Them Wanting More'

By SUSAN MYRILL DOUGHERTY
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD — One of the mantras of smart performers is "Always leave them wanting more." That could be said of the Sunday afternoon concert on March 31, at Westfield's First United Methodist Church, where Music Director Trent Johnson's Oratorio Singers of Westfield presented a lovely program that had the audience members standing in appreciation.

The 39th annual concert, entitled *Sonic Spectacular*, offered music scored for brass, organ and percussion by Mr. Johnson.

The audience was invited in the first half of the program to sing certain verses in John Rutter's glorious arrangement of "All Creatures of our God and King". In addition to the Rutter arrangement, the concert featured English Cathedral anthems along with Mozart's *Te Deum Laudamus*, Elgar's *Spirit of the Lord*

and selections from Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and *Christus*.

One might expect that the seemingly brass-heavy music with four trumpets, three trombones, a tuba, and timpani would overwhelm the singers, but it was well-balanced with the chorus of 43 voices.

The program opened with Eugene Gigout's "Grand Choeur Dialogue," a work which also incorporated the church's Aeolian-Skinner pipe organ that was expertly manned by Yang-He Song. Voice and instruments echoed the darkness in tone and feel during the phrase "You overcame the sting of death" and then rose to a glorious, triumphant crescendo with "We praise your name forever." Use of trumpets, according to program notes by Paul Mack Somers, was "often symbolic of the king on the battlefield or with his army. In church music this was used for God as ruler and battler against the forces of evil."

"The Holy City" by Stephan Adams didn't disappoint. This music was one of the most commercially successful songs in the UK and the United States around the beginning of the 20th century and is reportedly the most pirated musical piece prior to the Internet. It's a story song that recalls the narrator dreaming and seeing the temple in old Jerusalem, the crucifixion, and a new Jerusalem where "no one was denied."

In John Ireland's somber "Greater Love Hath No Man," the lovely soprano voice of Shabnam Abedi soared and was joined by the chorus in the hopeful climax. "So the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations." Charles Wood's "O Thou the Central Orb" featured a delightful solo trumpet in parts and the song was punctuated by a thrilling timpani accompaniment.

Felix Mendelssohn's "Behold a Star" *— CONTINUED ON PAGE 17 —*

WESTFIELD — The Westfield Community Concert band will present its annual Spring Concert tonight, April 4, at 7:30 p.m. at Edison Intermediate School, 800 Rahway Avenue. Thomas Connors, conductor and music director of the band, has prepared a program, which is highlighted by popular, traditional and contemporary selections for wind band.

The program will feature the band's premier performance of the complete *Autobiography* by composer and arranger, Robert Russell Bennett. A series of seven, two-minute musical "snapshots" of significant events from his own life, Bennett wrote this composition in 1976 for a performance by the world-famous Goldman Band. This tribute to his life and musical development stands as the last of Bennett's major compositions.

The program will also include Walter Piston's 1950 contemporary classic, *Tunbridge Fair*. Piston received his musical training at Harvard University and taught music at Harvard for many years. Among his many well-known students was the legendary Leonard Bernstein.

The band also performs *First Suite* in E-flat, written in 1909 by Gustav

Holst, which is a three-movement composition that has become an international staple of wind band reper-



Thomas Connors

toire. Another program selection, *Variations on a Shaker Melody*, written in 1960 by renowned American composer, Aaron Copland, has be-

come one of the most familiar melodies through its frequent appearance in film, television and other settings.

The band's final selection will be *New London Pictures*, by Nigel Hess. *New London Pictures* represents modern elements of London in the 21st Century, in three "scenes": *Millennium Bridge*, *London Eye and Congestion Charge*. "The music will bring to life the landmark bridge, giant Ferris wheel and hectic traffic that London is now best known for" said Mr. Connors.

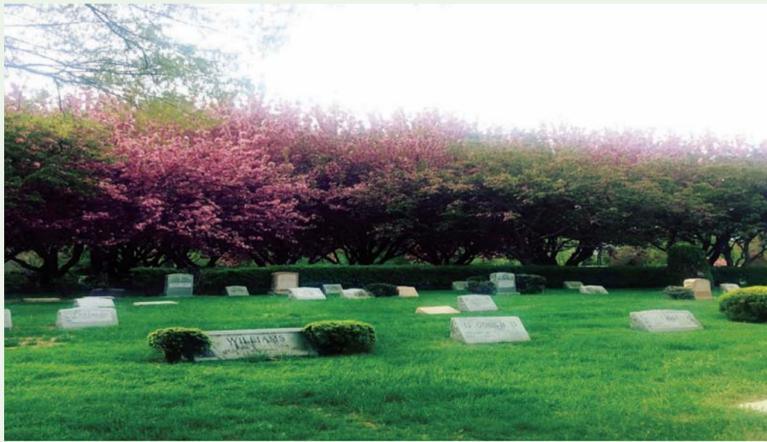
The band, in its 107th concert season, will also be presenting its annual Summer Concert Series on Thursdays, June 20, June 27, July 4, July 11 and July 18 in Westfield's Mindowaskin Park.

Experienced area musicians may inquire about joining the band by contacting Barry Rosenberg, band president, at (732) 356-9400 or by email at info@westfieldcommunityband.com. The band rehearses each Wednesday evening from 7:15 to 9:30 p.m. in the community room located in the Westfield Municipal Building, 425 East Broad Street, and performs throughout the year.



MENDELSSOHN MOMENT...Choir members of the Oratorio Singers of Westfield present "And Then Shall Your Light Break Forth" from Felix Mendelssohn's *Elijah* at Sunday's concert, entitled *Sonic Spectacular*.

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