

LaGrange Symphony Orchestra
American Celebration
Concert Review By: Tonya Frank

Tuesday evening was a night filled with beautiful music as the LaGrange Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Patricio Cobos, filled Callaway Auditorium with the melodic sounds of Leonard Bernstein, Douglas Hooker, Aaron Copland and Morton Gould as they presented "American Celebration." Patriotism coursed through my veins as the audience stood and sang the Star Spangled Banner to begin the evening. The audience was captivated from beginning to end as each piece received a standing ovation. The orchestra delighted the audience with the familiar sounds of Leonard Bernstein's "Candide Overture." Douglas Hooker's "Sinai Symphony" was a real crowd pleaser. After the intermission, Emily Landa took the stage with an extraordinary performance of "Eight Poems of Emily Dickinson" and the orchestra ended the night with "American Salute" by Morton Gould.

"Candide Overture" was a high-spirited curtain raiser with its opening burst of brass. Douglas Hooker's "Sinai Symphony" won the hearts of the audience from the first movement. Having lived in Israel as a child, the piece brought to mind the familiar sounds of the Middle East. Beginning with, "The Land," one could feel the constant rhythmic movement of the music. "The Mediations" moved to a more mellow realm while in the third movement, "Al Souk(The Grand Market)", one could feel the excitement and the cacophony of sounds reverberating in the music. Hooker's finale, "Ocean Flight" depicts the joy of returning home. I was especially moved by the flowing rhythm of the final movement and was left wanting more. Whether or not one has visited the region, it was a magnificent musical journey. Having Mr. Hooker present was an added treat as he was well received by the audience with a lengthy standing ovation.

Emily Landa followed the intermission with an extraordinary performance singing "Eight Poems of Emily Dickinson" by Aaron Copland. The songs were quite challenging for any singer, but Ms. Landa sang the pieces with flawless ease. Although the orchestra is a joy in which to listen, this concertgoer would rather have heard more of Landa's rich lower tones than the sometimes overpowering sounds of the instruments. Again the audience rose to their feet with thunderous applause as Ms. Landa completed her piece. The unexpected encore performance by Landa and Randall Levin was the highlight of her performance. The duet "Il core vi dono" from Mozart's "Cosi fan tutte" left the audience wanting more.

As the concert came to a close with Morton Gould's "American Salute", the audience was once again entertained with an easily recognizable melody, "When Johnny Comes Marching Home," that boldly caught everyone's attention. The audience exploded with shouts of encore as they rose quickly to their feet for another standing ovation. The encore performance featuring the Columbus State University students from Israel, dubbed the Dynamic Duo by Conductor Cobos, was packed with enthusiasm and musical genius. The students played with such energy and passion while the orchestra again shined with their outstanding ability to wow the audience. Congratulations to Conductor Patricio Cobos and

the LaGrange Symphony Orchestra for an outstanding performance. Anyone who has not attended a performance of the LaGrange Symphony Orchestra should make plans to be entertained. How fortunate this community is to have such a talented group of musicians.

The review of the concert prepared by Tonya Frank. Ms Frank teaches 3rd grade Extension at Berta Weathersbee Elementary. Every year she prepares her students for the Children's Concert in March by using the Georgia Performance Standards to tie into the musical selections. This year's Children's Concerts will take place in Valley, Alabama on March 27 and again on March 28 at LaGrange College's Callaway Auditorium.