

## Sumptuous Season Opener for the LaGrange Symphony

On Tuesday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, the LaGrange Symphony Orchestra opened its 2008-2009 concert series *Classical Sounds from Near and Far* with a glimpse of the world through the compositional eyes of Felix Mendelssohn. After the playing of the national anthem, the concert began in earnest with the crashing waves of The *Hebrides* Overture in tumbling spirals tossed back and forth between the violins and cellos. *Hebrides* depicts Mendelssohn's travels to Scotland and the impressions of solitude amidst great natural beauty that the "lonely isle" made upon him. Within the first few bars of the overture the audience is thrust into a frantic storm at sea. The pounding of the timpani was especially rich and stirring as the warm tones of the violas and cellos assuaged the chilling melody that was passed on to the wind section. Such complexity was a delight to both the eye and ear as conductor Patricio Cobos visibly propelled the piece to its finale with dizzying yet accurate momentum.

The second selection, Violin Concerto in E minor, kept Mendelssohn's travels a little closer to home in Leipzig, Germany. Here the composer's collaboration with his dear friend, violinist Ferdinand David, led to a beloved treatment of the concerto with insight into what the full breadth of a violinist's abilities should be. Featured soloist Sergiu Schwartz, a world renowned violinist and professor at Columbus State University's Schwob School of Music, gave an utterly exciting performance. He proved himself a master in the plaintive solo opening to the piece but then impressed further as the clarity of his tone firmly stood its ground amidst the fullness of the orchestra. Schwartz conquered the Allegro movement with great confidence as Cobos allowed just the right amount of freedom in his conducting to showcase Schwartz's expressivity to its greatest advantage. The dynamic between conductor, orchestra and soloist was excellent. Schwartz flew through bravura passages with a flourish yet maintained a matter of fact manner that was both charming and tastefully restrained. When urged by the audience to do an encore, both soloist and orchestra went back to the final allegro and performed at an almost impossibly brisk tempo. The wind section especially showed tremendous talent in supporting this exuberant feat.

Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 4 in A Major closed out the evening's travels in the Italian countryside. The allegro and andante movements were competent. The orchestra certainly channeled Rossini during the heralding horn fifths of the moderato movement and the flutes positively sparkled with trills and curving phrases in this and the presto Saltarello portion. The strings played a magnificent role in the lush orchestration of the final section as their bows danced the tarantella. Bravi tutti!

Mark your calendars for *Music: The Invisible Art* on November 18<sup>th</sup>. As the first concert of the season indicates, the next installment is not to be missed!

Rachaele LaManna Hurd graduated summa cum laude from LaGrange College with a Bachelor of Music degree in 2006. She worked for two years in the offices of The

Atlanta Opera and now lives in LaGrange with her husband, Johnny Hurd, and their six-month-old son, Jack.