

Solano Winds shine at 'Celebrations' concert

By Kathleen Whalen | Daily Republic correspondent | December 27, 2010 16:34



Solano Winds euphonium players Ray Cabral, Delbert Bump and Bill Brenton, left to right, play their brass instruments during a rehearsal at Solano Community College. Photo by Mike Greener

FAIRFIELD - Those fans of the Solano Winds who turned out Dec. 17, despite the cold and rain, to pack the Fairfield Center for Creative Arts, were treated to an exciting evening of eclectic music.

The first half of the program featured music from all over the world, while after the intermission the focus was on music traditional to the holiday season.

But even before the concert started, the 'celebration' began. A quartet consisting of Bill Brenton and Tim Mack on tubas and Delbert Bump and Ray Cabral on euphoniums (instruments with the range of trombones but a warm, rich, tuba-like sound) played traditional Christmas carols in the lobby. These are instruments usually

relegated to a supporting role so it was quite enjoyable to hear, and watch, them in the limelight.

The Solano Winds opened with an assured, sparkling rendition of John Philip Sousa's 'The Bride Elect March.' The energy remained high through the next piece, 'Celebration,' from Robert Russell Bennett's 'Symphonic Songs for Band.'

The Winds played this tricky piece with ease and flair. And, no one who was present will forget Wally Hunt swiveling and whirling as he struck the five timpani that encircled him.

The John Williams film score for 'Catch Me if You Can' alternated romantic or adventure movie-music passages with jazz elements from the 1950s and 1960s. Solo alto saxophonist Stinn McDaniel evoked late nights in smoky clubs as he nonchalantly navigated the complex melodic line and rapidly implied passing chords of the period.

'Waltz King' Johann Strauss, could, it turns out, also write a mean polka. 'Eljen A Magyar,' written in 1869 to celebrate the second anniversary of Hungarian self-governance, though ostensibly a dance tune, has a remarkably martial sound, and the Winds played it with crisp precision.

Opening with chiming bells and featuring a theme strongly influenced by indigenous music, 'Mass,' the second movement of H. Owen Reed's 'La Fiesta Mexicana,' was performed with requisite solemnity and grandeur. The trombones were the standouts here, playing with a brooding intensity that quite literally took my breath away. It would be wonderful to hear the Solano Winds assay the entire piece.

Also displaying Latin-American influences was the festive 'Symphonic Dance No. 3: Fiesta' by Clifton Williams. Trumpets, trombones and the entire percussion section played with barely controlled abandon, bringing the first half of the program to a triumphant finish.

'A Fireside Christmas,' by Sammy Nestico, is a medley of familiar Christmas tunes that the Winds, to their credit, played with the same concentration and attention to detail they bring to less well-known or more difficult works.

The next work, "'Twas the Night Before Christmas' (words by Clement Clarke Moore, music by Bill Holcombe) may be familiar, but it charmed nonetheless. Narrator for the evening was Dick Grokenberger, otherwise to be found in the tuba section, whose mellifluous voice and dramatic delivery, over playful accompaniment by the Winds, kept us interested in a story which, for most, held no surprises. (Though watching Bill Doherty try to conduct with a large candy cane was a little startling.)

'Rhapsody for Hanukkah,' arranged by Stephen Bulla, is, as the title suggests, based on Hanukkah songs. Though commissioned and written for a brass band, in Doherty's hands it had a full-throated, almost orchestral sound.

The woodwinds, especially Rafael Figueroa on bassoon and Bill Aron, Emily Doherty and Candis Hanson on oboes, played with a clear, penetrating yet expressive tone.

Leroy Anderson's 'Sleigh Ride,' complete with sleigh bells and clomping horse hooves, is a light-hearted romp and was thoroughly enjoyable, albeit brief.

'A Canadian Brass Christmas,' another medley of Christmas songs, this time arranged by long-time Canadian Brass composers Luther Henderson and Howard Cable, was the penultimate piece of the evening. The Solano Winds played with confidence and, especially from the horns, a warmly burnished tone.

The concert closed with an audience sing-along of 'White Christmas,' in an arrangement by the Winds' former director, the late and much-loved Bob Briggs. I was moved to see two women in the clarinet section who, until they had to play their instruments, were signing "White Christmas" for the hearing-impaired in the audience.

This sold-out concert was a wonderful way to celebrate the holiday season.

Kathleen Whalen is a music-lover who lives in West Sacramento. She can be reached at kw1954ohio@yahoo.com.

Solano Winds Community Concert Band

'Celebrations' annual holiday season concert

4 stars out of 4

Copyright © 2010 Daily Republic. 1250 Texas St. Fairfield CA 94533. All rights reserved. The Daily Republic is part of the McNaughton Newspapers including the Davis Enterprise, the Mountain Democrat, Village Life, and Winters Express newspapers. All content is property of the Daily Republic and may not be reprinted or published in any form without written permission from the

Daily Republic.
Powered by [PHPography](#)