



Review: Solano Winds offers holiday gift to community

By **Carol Moore**

The Solano Winds and conductor Bill Doherty unwrapped “Celebrating America’s Heritage” as their holiday gift to the community last Friday night at the Downtown Theatre.

Trumpeters Heather Handa, Jack Hanes, Dan Mathews, Kurt Nystrom, Joe Regner, Mason St. Pierre and Jim Wolf provided the exclamation points for “Fanfare for the Common Man.”

When Aaron Copland composed this powerful tribute to the country’s wartime unity in 1942, he said, “I still believe that there is an American dream of peace and prosperity for everyone.”

Henry Wood’s “Fantasia on British Sea Songs” has many melodies that America borrowed from the British navy.

Announcer Jerry Hedrick cautioned the audience not to respond to bugle calls to head for the exits.

Far better to sit and enjoy the music, especially from Ray Cabral on euphonium; Heather Handa, trumpet; Robert Honeychurch, alto saxophone; Sherrill Honeychurch, flute; and Pam Nadeau, clarinet.

“Four Scottish Dances” by Malcolm Arnold is a light-hearted blend of folk songs, reels and flings. The soloists were Mary Cabral on oboe and Lynn Garrison on bassoon.

Harpist Barbara Tutt was featured in the third allegretto movement.

Christopher Hulett, a Solano Winds tuba player, then took the podium to conduct “Variations on America,” by Charles Ives.

Considered a tour de force for organists, the original composition premiered for a Fourth of July event in 1892 when Ives was 19. Yet he called it “almost as easy as playing baseball.” That comparison was left to the audience as they listened to the concert band version of the anthem’s familiar passages.

Doherty returned to lead “The Pathfinder of Panama March,” written by John Philip Sousa to commemorate the completion of the Panama Canal.

The title refers not to a person but to the canal itself, which shortened the ocean distance between New York and California by 8,000 miles.

The uniquely American selections continued with “Blues for Santa.”

Fairfield Mayor Harry T. Price provided the lyrics as the band played Robert W. Smith’s take on the holiday song, “Up on the Rooftops.”

Dressed in his top hat finery, Ron Garrison, president of the band’s board of directors, narrated the musical version of “’Twas the Night Before Christmas” by Bill Holcombe.

Indeed, “St. Nicholas came with a bound,” courtesy of bass drummer Phil Doty.

Not even Christmas carols are safe from the bouncy, syncopated sounds of American music as Sammy Nestico proved with “Good Swing Wenceslas,” for which Glenn Nash was the horn soloist.

Leroy Anderson wrote the last two numbers: “Sleigh Ride,” with sound effects from Brian Simpson on woodblocks and Craige Lucowicz on slapstick, and “A Christmas Festival,” a medley of holiday songs.

The concert ended with the traditional sing-along of Irving Berlin’s “White Christmas” as arranged by the band’s founding director, Robert O. Briggs.

Akim Torres, who plays tuba, bassoon and horn as a freshman at Vacaville High School, won the prize drawing to conduct this final number. He took delight in being able to direct two of his teachers in the band, Melinda Packer, tenor saxophone, and Brian Simpson, percussion.

The band's 25th season will continue March 13 with a program titled "Blue Notes," featuring vocalist Janese Powell and Latin jazz pianist, Airman 1st Class Luis Muniz.

Tickets can be purchased at www.solanowinds.org or at the Downtown Theatre's box office at 1035 Texas St., Fairfield.

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