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Mr. Pecherek

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On March 8th, 2018 the Illinois Valley Community College Wind Ensemble performed at the Dr. Mary Margaret Weeg Cultural Center. The performance was conducted by Gene Montgomery. The Wind Ensemble included IVCC students, local and regional music educators, and community members. The show consisted of seven pieces all by various composers. The performance included the music of J.P. Sousa, Joseph Willcox Jenkins, Davide Delle Cese, Timothy Mahr, Camille Saint-Saens, George Gershwin/arr. Robert Russell Bennett, and G.H. Huffine. I think the musical selections for this woodwind concert were very well and intricately picked as it kinda took us back through time. There was a very calming but energetic atmosphere within the auditorium as we waited for the show to begin.

“The Charlatan” composed by John Philip Sousa in 1898 was the first piece of music that the Ensemble played. After they finished, the Conductor informed us that this was a combination from Acts II and III in the operetta “The Charlatan” and that this as considered “not one of his best” pieces. I could not disagree more. I think this was the perfect piece to start with as it was very upbeat, patriotic, and definitely all about the melody. For most of the time, the melody was played by the flutes and clarinets. There was also many flute and clarinet solo pieces, focusing on the melody even more. I thought the tempo was increasing as the piece went on and the dynamics were changing from long very soft melodies to very loud booms.

The next piece played was called “American Overture” composed by Joseph Willcox Jenkins in 1953. This was his first ever Wind Ensemble piece and it is often heard in Western Grand Epics. The piece had switching dynamics and a fast tempo that led to a back and forth

fighting stampede feel. The rhythm was pretty steady which makes sense for a Western piece. The dynamics slowed for the flute, clarinet, trumpet, and trombone “solos” in the middle, but then there was definitely a loud and fast ending!

The next piece, “Inglesina” or “The Little English Girl,” is the most famous piece by composer, Davide Delle Cese (1871). This march is very well known and has even been ranked as the tenth most popular march in the world. It began with a high pitch song-like melody that was accompanied with the chirping sounds of the deeper pitch horns. The trombone had a deep background melody, while the melody from the flute, clarinet, tuba, and trumpet was the primary focal point. I thought the musical cohesion of the ensemble during this piece was impressive as it had changing dynamics.

“Heroic Valor” has three movements that were composed by Timothy Mahr in 2011. The first movement is called “Dedication”. This piece had a breezy and winding whirlwind type feel to it. It was played in major key and the gong was used as an accent to the melody throughout the piece. The second movement is called “Meditation”. The title of this movement is slightly confusing to me because when I think of meditating, I think of relaxing, and this piece felt more depressing. It was in minor key which gave this movement a sad feeling. The tuba and trombone sound like they are whining and upset. This movement makes me think of a battle that has just been lost. The title of the third movement, “Celebration,” was definitely more fitting. This piece was in major key and had a beautiful melody led by the clarinet. It had started off with very soft dynamics in the beginning and worked its way up to loud dynamics for the middle and end.

Although the first and third movements didn't really have a “complete” melody, the second definitely had a lasting melody. As they played through the movements I felt as if I was being moved through a story of the realities of war. These movements were definitely interesting at every second!

The next piece was “Pas Redouble,” a military-style fast concert march, composed by Camille Saint-Saens in 1887. The tempo of this piece was very fast and created a building suspense. There was very heavy deeps and very light highs which created quite the dissonance. However, this made total sense when I found out the piece was originally composed for two people playing the same piano. I never really thought it was possible with two such different instruments, but the trumpets and the clarinets created a beautiful melody.

The next piece was one of composer George Jacob Gershwin most popular melodies. Composed in 1935, this piece was titled “Porgy and Bess” and its from a from a contemporary opera. This piece completely focused on the melody and all the moods at every single part. It had a ternary form that started with tubas leading the melody, then the flute and clarinet leading, and then the tubas again. It was mostly minor with a few major keys. There was also soft and loud dynamics at the same time. It was very loud at the end which a very drastic change in dynamics. There was a very heavy and escalating ending that was played by the piccolo, flute, and clarinet. I really enjoyed listening to all the twists and turns of this piece.

The last piece was titled “Them Basses” by G.H. Huffine. It is considered a “swinging” march. It’s also been subtitled as “A March in which the Basses have the Melody throughout”. This piece was composed in 1924 and it really reminded me of Louis Armstrong's 1938 classic “When the Saints Go Marching In”. This piece was in major key the entire time. There was an exciting and fighting like melody between the tuba/trombone and the flute/trumpet.

Overall, the pieces of music that were performed in this concert were very pleasurable. This was the first wind concert I have ever attended I am glad it was one right in the Illinois Valley. Although I had my doubts at first, I actually really enjoyed the Illinois Valley Wind Ensemble performance. I’m even eager to see what the Illinois Valley Jazz Ensemble will be like! After listening and hearing music like this in person, it really makes you appreciate it. My favorite piece would either have to “Heroic Valor” or “Porgy and Bess” as they both led me through a mental story. During the concert I couldn't help but feel guilty for never seeing a concert like this before. I felt like I had been missing out my whole life. I certainly did not feel like I was in a Community College auditorium at all. I felt as if I was listening to a show played in a fancy professional hall in downtown Chicago. I truly cannot believe that musical performances like this have always been near me and I never knew it! I had a very positive experience overall. The Illinois Valley Community College Wind Ensemble gave an outstanding performance and as Gene Montgomery would say, I definitely have some “pleasant melodic memories”.