

## Holiday Pops Evokes the Season's Multitude of Moods

Written by Abbie Dombrock

Tuesday, 22 November 2005 18:00

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After a rambunctious, sacred, fun-loving, somber Holiday Pops concert filled with elements that make the holidays special, the Christmas season has finally officially begun. The Quad Symphony Orchestra Association and the Quad City Arts Festival of Trees presented an enchanting kickoff at The Mark of the Quad Cities on Saturday night, complete with instrumentalists, vocalists of all ages, and vivacious figure skaters. And the audience loved every minute, sharing the experience with friends and family.

The concert accentuated the talents of each group of performers and individual artists while bringing them together to spin a cohesive experience of the season. Guest director Michael Butterman, who conducts orchestras all over the nation, acted as emcee and lent a light-hearted tone to the evening, introducing many of the songs and complimenting everyone in attendance, both on and off the stage, profusely. The orchestra provided accompaniment to almost every song, but they were able to show their talent in the piece "Little Bolero Boy." A rendition of the serious "Little Drummer Boy," the piece began with the familiar drum pattern, which was joined presently by a delicate flute solo. From there, more and more members of the orchestra added to the melody, until it was a powerful, resounding force.

The Holiday Pops Children's Chorus, directed by Mary Tallitsch, and the Sanctuary Choir of First Presbyterian Church, led by Steven Jobman, complemented each other well. The combined choirs contributed innocence and maturity to each song, especially the familiar carol "I Saw Three Ships." The adult choir showed its versatility, picking up hand bells to embellish the piece. The children's choir had fun with "It's a Wonderful Christmas," and choir and audience members alike swayed with the music or tapped their toes.

The highlight of the evening for me was the performance of visiting quintet, Top Brass, which lent the concert the sparkle and jolliness it needed to be truly striking. Their medley of Christmas carols combined with the jazz standard "Swing, Swing, Swing" made me want to get up and dance. The laid-back feel of the song almost fooled me into thinking the arrangement wasn't challenging, until I noticed the performers' fingers flying and the dizzying improvisation. "Santa Wants a Tuba for Christmas" was another highlight, in which the baritone player narrated

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and sang the tale of how Santa finally got his coveted Christmas present, a tuba. Who knew Santa had such musical talent?

Skaters from the Figure Skating Club of the Quad Cities provided the visual treat of the concert, actualizing the music on the ice. The remarkable talent of these performers was apparent as they completed difficult moves, including throws, jumps, and technical footwork, while portraying the feeling of the music, whether fun and playful or serious and sacred. Overall, the most moving piece of the evening, "Still, Still, Still," combined the tender voices of the adult choir, the soothing sounds of the orchestra, and the flowing motions of the skaters. The light-blue, slightly sparkly outfits of the skaters and their circular, mesmerizing choreography were reminiscent of gently falling flakes of snow, and the advanced moves contributed to the general sense of awe. Holiday Pops Skating Director and former professional skater Elena Kvitchenko Cockerell and her former skating partner, Rashid Kadyrkaev, took the ice at the end of the piece, further impressing us with well-performed throws, lifts, and jumps.

I can't describe each feeling and mood the event evoked. But it was the perfect way to experience much of the joy, seriousness, and playfulness of the season in one evening. The rest of the audience seemed to agree with me. Their laughter, applause, and a standing ovation at the end indicate the event will become (if it's not already) a Christmas tradition for multitudes of Quad Cities families.