

# arts/entertainment

## Conductor gets warm reception in Lincoln concert

By Michael Nikunen

Friday First Plymouth Congregational Church featured the Nebraska Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Alfred Savia, assistant Conductor of the Florida Symphony.

Appearing with the orchestra was guitarist Stephen Waechter, in a performance of the *Concerto d'Aranjuez* by Rodrigo. Violinist Arnold Schotz, performed the *Concerto in A Minor* by J.S. Bach. Also included in this program were *Dances Concertantes of Stravinsky* and *Symphony Number 29 in A Major* by Mozart.

The First Plymouth Congregational Church must be recognized as one of the successful elements in the orchestra's performance. This magnificent building set an appropriate mood for the orchestra to build upon, not to mention the near-perfect acoustics of the main hall.

### Bach concerto

The orchestra began with *Concerto in A Minor* by J.S. Bach. The allegro moderato began the progression, followed by andante and ending with allegro assai.

The concerto, in its purest sense is a contest of melodies and instruments, presenting an overall thematic

movement. In this sense, the orchestra moved nicely into the progressions.

Schatz entered in the first movement, with his violin bringing a unique line of music that moved nicely with the orchestra.

In the second andante movement the orchestra and soloist expressed their separate integrities simultaneously in beautiful quest for the theme. The piece was finished in a spirited allegro assai that captured the audience in its bouncy tempo.

### Masterful performance

Schatz, who is familiar to Nebraskans because of his many performances, played masterfully. His heart and ear must be connected to his instrument, as evidenced by his playing.

## review

The second half of the concert featured Waechter's guitar solos. The first piece was *Concerto d'Aranjuez* by Joaquin Rodrigo. It is surprising to see a guitar in a chamber orchestra. The use of a guitar in this particular piece is rather unconventional, and the resulting performance served as an indicator of this.

### Off-set orchestra

The orchestra seemed at its best in this section, but the guitar off-set the orchestration and balance. Though alone the guitar created some unique melodies and chord progressions, it did not sound well with the rest of the orchestra. The music of the orchestra was sweet and certain, while the guitar served to undermine this with lower tonal qualities and a varying tempo.

The Nebraska Chamber Orchestra is a group of gifted musicians, who were fortunate enough to be conducted by Alfred Savia. Savia has conducted several symphonies across the nation and was trained by several superb conductors in Italy. This training came through once again as he conducted the orchestra to a warm ovation.



Photo by Mary Anne Golon

Alfred Savia, assistant Conductor of the Florida Symphony, gave an excellent performance Friday as guest conductor of the Nebraska Chamber Orchestra.

## Breezy musical is well done, but not great

By Peg Sheldrick

It isn't easy to evaluate the production of *Out to the Wind* which premiered at Kimball Recital Hall this weekend. To call it anything less than a fine, entertaining evening is unfair; but to call it an unqualified success is inaccurate.

Clearly a great deal of hard work went into its preparation, and the Friday night audience seemed to enjoy the show. It was a treat for the eyes and ears.

## review

What it failed to be was a treat for the mind. *Out to the Wind* is described as a musical drama, and this production emphasized the music. With a little more emphasis on the drama, the show could have been, rather than a parade of pleasant scenes and songs, a fine, well-rounded piece of theatre.

### Confusion

Set in Nebraska in 1896, the show centers on Eric Hermanson, a young immigrant fiddler faced with a choice between the happy, "sinful" life he has led and the somber, joyless "salvation" offered by a local revivalist sect that regards music as evil. His confusion continues until he meets Margaret Elliot, a high spirited easterner touring the west.

The music, settings and costumes were well executed, and the libretto seemed intelligent and true to Cather.

Robert Beadell's score encompassed a wide variety of musical styles, from conventional duets to tender ballads to serious, complex musical soliloquies.

Peter Hauser's sets were excellent and detailed. The set for Moon Rock was especially fine, truly conveying a sense of wide open spaces and endless prairies. It was much more successful than the setting which opened the play, an elevated, rocky area with only a patch of sky visible that seemed to belie all the grandeur and space Eric was singing about.

Virginia Faulkner's libretto included

good lyrics and some clever dialogue.

### Filming hurt

The show's problems arose from circumstances largely beyond anyone's control. For one thing, the show was being filmed by NETV. This especially hurt the lighting, since subtle effects that could have helped set scenes and focus attention were lost in a wash of white light.

The presence of the cameras was not in itself distracting, but it seemed to encourage the cast to use primarily the front of the stage. This may have been necessary for filming purposes.

Staging a musical, and a new one at that, is no easy business, and having to adjust to the conflicting needs of live theatre and television programming made it an even more arduous task. It's nice that a statewide audience has the chance to see the show but it's unfortunate the production had to cope with more than one kind of audience at a time.

### Splendor

The show had plenty of visual and vocal splendor. What it lacked was a sense of continuity and a certain dramatic tension. These problems were partly due to the structure and nature of the play and partly due to the nature of the troupe presenting it.

The show's structure hurt its continuity. The first act is spent in alternating scenes showing the lives of Eric and Margaret moving closer to a point of intersection. Each scene is long and involves several songs.

Somehow the story gets a little lost in the scenery and music. The problem with musicals is that whenever a song occurs, the action pretty much grinds to a halt, and if too many of the songs are just diversions with no particular relation to the main action, one begins to forget what the show is about and to lose track of what went on in the previous scene.

### Opera spoofs

For example, in Scene 3, the audience was given not one but four opera spoofs in a row. All of them were funny songs but with so many together it was hard to appreciate them, and it was certainly hard to remember poor Eric back in Moonrock struggling for his soul.

Perhaps if the alternations between Eric's situation and Margaret's had been more frequent, there would have been a better sense of where the show was going. This would have posed many staging problems, though.

Scene changes were complicated enough as it was. They were executed with remarkable swiftness, but often there was no music to cover the noise and maintain a feeling of continuity between scenes. One especially unhappy moment was when, after a tender love scene between Eric and Margaret, the actors had to clamber down from the windmill in the semidarkness and push the scenery off-stage.

### Fine singers

It isn't fair to expect the School of Music Opera Theatre to give certain dramatic aspects the kind of attention they would have been given in a University Theatre production.

Eric and Margaret had no problems holding their own when singing, and indeed, the show was blessed with fine singers and musicians throughout. But the production was given (quite understandably) a rather operatic treatment, and that doesn't really work with a musical.

With the delightful distractions that abound in a show of this kind, it takes strong acting to make the audience concentrate on the characters.

This is basically a psychological story. Both main characters have choices to make about the kind of life they want to pursue: Eric must decide if his music is indeed sinful, and Margaret must decide if she really wants to return to the east when her spirit feels so free in the west.

A greater emphasis on acting and stage movements would have helped convey these internal conflicts more convincingly. As it was, the main characters come into focus when singing, but the rest of the time the picture was fairly generalized and the show didn't build up to much of anything.

*Out to the Wind* was a good show. Given the various limitations and pressures everyone involved was working under, it was a remarkable show. The unfortunate part is that with a more effective use of a few dramaturgical devices, it might have been a great show.

## Dirt Cheap is remodeling for a dance studio

The second floor of Dirt Cheap is being remodeled for a dance studio.

TRUDANCE, according to the instructor Trudy Knisely, will provide Lincoln with a dance studio that offers several types of dance.

"I feel dance shouldn't be for a certain age group," Knisely said. "All people can benefit from it because of its therapeutic value."

Dirt Cheap has donated the space above their store for use by the studio for three years, she said.

Disco, modern, jazz, African ethnic, child creation and dance education will be featured. Knisely spent time in San Francisco to learn about African dance which was varied rhythms.

"Dance education is needed in the Midwest," Knisely said. "When I tell people that I am a modern dancer, they immediately think all I do is the latest steps."

Knisely presently works as a soloist in modern dance. She said she tried working with other people but found that her style was hard to teach.

"Besides, I don't believe other people should turn out like me," Knisely said.

Tentatively, she said membership fees will be \$10 a year. A newsletter will be sent to all members and they will be informed of any performances. Classes will last between one and one and one-half hours. The cost is \$4 per hour and members pay a reduced rate of \$3.50.

Knisely said she hopes the studio will be open the first part of March.

"I hope to get a lot of university students because it (the studio) is so close and cheaper than other studios. Also I hope to educate the public, from children to elderly, on the benefits of dance," Knisely said.