



THE
OKLAHOMAN

January 11, 2017

Classics concert overcomes wintry temperatures outdoors

By Rick Rogers

Freezing temperatures and a few lingering patches of ice may have kept some subscribers from attending the Oklahoma City Philharmonic's recent classics concert. But for those who braved the wintry elements, the rewards more than made up for the effort.

David Lockington, a native of Great Britain who holds music directorships with two orchestras in southern California, made an impressive showing in a concert featuring music by Copland, Saint-Saens and Elgar.

Copland's "Buckaroo Holiday," an excerpt from the ballet "Rodeo," was distinguished by nicely pointed rhythms and sharp dynamic contrasts. The expert collaboration between conductor and orchestra also drew one's attention to the tightness of the ensemble.

Hye-Jin Kim made her Philharmonic debut in the "Violin Concerto No. 3" by the prolific French composer Saint-Saens. The soloist drew a big sound from her Gioffredo Cappa violin, with Lockington providing a solid foundation for Kim's attractive playing.

Soloist and orchestra deftly traded melodic figures back and forth in the central Andantino, with Kim taking a magisterial approach that well suited this music. She perfectly captured the ethereal quality of this beautifully evocative music.

The finale bubbled with excitement, led by Kim's compelling playing and nicely-shaped phrasing. Together with Lockington's solid accompaniment in the final Allegro, Kim's performance had a buoyancy that kept the listener riveted.

Elgar's "Enigma Variations," a musical portrait of the composer's friends, demands considerable flexibility from an orchestra with its constantly changing moods and technical demands. This orchestra responded with conviction and the playing never failed to impress.

The big orchestral snarl that concluded Var. IV, the lushness of the playing in Var. V and an abundance of excitement in Var. VII were but a few of the highlights. From its hushed opening to a shattering climax, the famous Nimrod Variation possessed a limpid beauty that reminded listeners just how lucky this community is to have such a fine orchestra.

Lockington also tended to emphasize inner voices that caught the ear in fascinating ways. With its roiling string flourishes, Var. XI was a standout, as was the hauntingly beautiful Var. XII. The final variation, a portrait of the composer, achieved a level of excitement that was second to none.

Not only did this performance prove that Elgar's "Enigma Variations" is a genuine masterpiece, it achieved what Lockington hoped for when he told the audience that the orchestra would blow the rafters off the concert hall. It was an experience that won't soon be forgotten