

Good night for Strauss

What: Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra
Where: Jacoby Symphony Hall, the Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts
When: Last night, 8 tonight and tomorrow
How'd it go: Fully Strauss-fully.

Symphony ending 50th on high note

By Steve Crosby
Special to the Times-Union

This is, as another composer wrote, "a lovely way to spend an evening," an evening chock-full of Strauss. Richard Strauss, that is.

REVIEW

It is also a lovely way to wrap up the Jackson-

ville Symphony Orchestra's 50th season and music director Fabio Machetti's first.

The program opened with Strauss' tone poem about a mythic, mischievous mid-European figure named Till Eulenspiegel. In 19th century European households, Till took the rap for those mischievous things that went wrong. Leaving the cap off the toothpaste or the toilet seat up. That sort of thing.

In this work, the orchestra chases Till through a series of pranks until the good town folk, growing tired of Till's long-term adolescence, catch him, try him and hang him. Then, of course, with a roll of the drums, as poor Till hangs twitching, remorse sets in. A little late, don't you think?

This is an athletic, exuberant piece, performed ably by the symphony, a good introduction to the orchestra for children not prone to nightmares.

Eric Ruske, at 36, an acclaimed French horn virtuoso, joined the orchestra for Strauss' *Concerto for Horn No. 1 in E-flat Major*.

The French horn, with its 32 or so feet of conical brass tubing, may be the most challenging of the brass instruments, with the possible exception of the piccolo trumpet. But how many of those does one see nowadays anyway?

Ruske, winner of many prestigious awards and a member of Boston University's music faculty, performs with a clarity of articulation that is breathtaking.

The post-intermission portion of the program was Strauss' *Ein Heldenleben (A Hero's Life)*, which he wrote about himself. What the heck, why not.

All in all, a great, bombastic end to a 50th season.