

REVIEW

Enchanting performance from

Springfield Orchestra

By Ed Gluck
Dayton Daily News

Although the evening started with an apology, the Springfield Symphony Orchestra performed a delightful concert Saturday night.

Longtime conductor John Ferritto explained to the audience at Kuss Auditorium that Hale Smith, composer of the opening work, *Contours*, had suffered a stroke recently and could not attend the performance of his jazzy, atonal work.

If *Contours* was challenging, a la John Cage compositions, the rest of the program was enchanting.

The featured work, Richard Strauss' horn concerto, was a short-but-sweet vehicle for guest artist Eric Ruske; the second half of the program was a short work by Rimsky-Korsakov followed by the rousing *Firebird Suite* by Stravinsky.

The symphony's next performance is a tribute to Henry Mancini on March 25, featuring vocals by Mancini's daughter, Monica.

For ticket information, call (937) 825-8100.

Virtuoso didn't disappoint

By Anthony Gottschlich
News-Sun Staff Writer

Review

French horn player Eric Ruske recently acknowledged that he will never be rich or famous, nor does he want to be.

But Saturday night in Kuss Auditorium, Ruske had his 15 minutes of fame.

Literally.

That's all the time he spent on stage performing Strauss' *Horn Concerto No. 1* with the Springfield Symphony Orchestra.

But could he blow. Hailed by critics as the foremost horn virtuoso of his generation, the 36-year old Ruske didn't disappoint.

Bedecked in black tails and a white bow tie, the blond-haired virtuoso delighted a near-capacity crowd at the Clark State Community College Performing Arts Center with an eloquent and graceful performance.

The French horn, inherently whimsical and somewhat unreliable, was under complete control by Ruske, who challenged the instrument to be at once, passionate and then gently lyrical.

Only once did he seem frustrated with the instrument, slaking his head and the horn as if it had a football caught in its throat.

Ruske swayed his body with the melody. During breaks, he smiled at the audience, twirled the horn like a baton and blew off the wet mouthpiece.

When finished, Conductor John Ferritto brought Ruske back to the stage for an encore.

"The boss doesn't feel like we've worked hard enough tonight," Ruske joked to the audience.

He then performed a short, lively number, M. Mavra's *Le Basque* to an appreciative audience, many of whom gave the artist a standing ovation. But Ruske was only part of the show.

The orchestra opened with a modern composition, Hale Smith's *Contours for Orchestra*. It was a haunting piece, fractured and dissonant at times and sounding much like the background music to a big-screen thriller, just before one of the good guys "gets it."

Smith had intended to be there for the performance, but had to cancel after suffering a stroke recently. He is recuperating in Manhattan.

Following Ruske's performance and intermission, the orchestra gave a splendid performance of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Capriccio Espagnole* and Igor Stravinsky's *Firebird Suite*, which drew a standing ovation from the audience.

February 20, 2000