

Horn virtuoso Ruske leaves them wanting more

Next: ESO Family Series

- 11 a.m. Saturday at Visual and Performing Arts Center at Elgin Community College
- For tickets or more information, call ESO Box Office at (847) 888-4000 or visit the orchestra online at www.elgin.symphony.org.
- Tickets start at \$6.

By George Rawlinson
SPECIAL TO THE COURIER NEWS

ELGIN — Think it's finally finished?

Au contraire.

Even with party hats, horns and New Year's decorations put away, another countdown has begun.

When will Eric Ruske return to town? A wonderful French horn soloist, Ruske appeared at Hennmens Cultural Center with the Elgin Symphony Orchestra over the weekend, their three-day pairing starting Friday evening and concluding Sunday afternoon.

Judging by audience applause, area arts patrons want a future made up of the same stuff as the immediate past — particularly in terms of Ruske's adventurous virtuosity, which was remarkable during a Bach violin concerto transcribed for horn. Collaborating with ESO Music Director Robert Hanson, Ruske led the orchestra through three marvelous move-

ments, the Bach piece ending with a forward flourish — mesmerizing and memorable in its inspired sound.

It was joyous joint offering, alive with exceptional orchestrations and brilliantly balanced execution, shifting from fast to slow, then back again.

Ruske, a critically acclaimed musician, works without a safety net, turning classical compositions into lovely long-lined phrases, each one a work of art.

A native of La Grange and a graduate of Northwestern University, Ruske is a tremendous talent, an internationally known performer whose intricately clean notes need no introduction, at least not to longtime fans.

And many of them turned out for his weekend performance at Hennmens. Each individual program began with Wagner's serene *Siegfried Idyll*, written as a combination Christmas/birthday present for the composer's wife, as well as a celebration of their infant son, for

whom it was named.

Members of the ESO perform again Saturday morning, this time as part of the orchestra's Family Series, a kid-friendly way of introducing children to classical music.

Saturday's program — "Around the World With Percussion" — promises to be especially "sound-sational," with ESO ensemble members showing the variety of instruments in the percussion family and the musical characteristics of the countries they visit.

Drumming, so seemingly simple, is irresistible, the ESO said.

And all things considered, who doesn't enjoy the liberating power of just banging on something?

Saturday's show will be staged at 11 a.m. in the Visual and Performing Arts Center at Elgin Community College.

Following the show, ensemble members will answer questions and invite young people up on stage, giving them an opportunity to experiment with available instruments.

Photo →