

Hornist, orchestra give top-flight performance

By Marcia Fountain

Special to the Times

Hornist Eric Ruske lived up to his billing in his performance Friday night with the El Paso Symphony Orchestra. This was particularly evident in the performance of the Strauss Horn Concerto No. 1.

Robust and passionate, the work displayed the instrument and its player well.

The orchestra presented a solid accompaniment, never covering the horn (not usually a real danger anyway), but giving it full support.

The Mozart Horn Concerto No. 2, which opened the evening, also received an excellent performance by Ruske. Not such a display work on the modern horn, it would have taxed the 18th-century player's natural horn considerably.

Ruske was not the only soloist of the evening. Soloists Carla Connolly, violin, and Mark Tatum, bass, gave Bottesini's "Passione Amorosa" an excellent performance.

In a program dripping with inserted papers, it seemed a pity not to find any short biographies of these two soloists. Connolly is the principal second violin of the El Paso Symphony and Tatum, from Albuquerque, often joins its bass section. They deserved some mention.

As for the music, well, let's face it — as a composer, Bottesini was a great bass player. The music is a hodgepodge of mid-19th century clichés. Bottesini's

Plan to attend

► **What:** French horn player Eric Ruske will perform with the El Paso Symphony Orchestra.

► **When:** 8 p.m. today.

► **Where:** Abraham Chavez Theatre.

► **How much:** \$7.50-\$23.

► **Information:** 532-3776.

work in the opera pit shows in quasi-dramatic moments in the music, but it could really claim to be neither amorous nor passionate.

Tatum showed himself an excellent bassist. The violin gets to do little more than arpeggiations, but Connolly also played beautifully the rather unpromising material.

The second half of the program featured the El Paso Symphony in Mozart's Symphony No. 39. Well-played though it was, the large string section seemed constrained in its efforts to preserve Mozart's grace and clarity. Given the small woodwind section Mozart calls for, a reduced string group might have made everyone's job easier.

The orchestra is in excellent shape and El Paso can be proud to claim it and its conductor, Gurer Aykal.

Marcia Fountain reviews classical music for the El Paso Times. A cellist, she teaches at UTEP.