

Chamber Symphony earns standing ovation at Rock Chapel

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Lovers of music and the holidays came together on Friday, Nov. 30, for the 2018 Holiday Concert put on by Director Laurin Smith at the Rock Chapel of First Baptist Church in Blairsville.

Admission to the concert was free to the public, and the pews of the chapel were filled with attendees as the musicians readied for their show.

The show began with the introduction of the North Georgia Chamber Symphony and their first song, Danza Final from "Estancia" by Alberto Ginastera, arranged by Robert Longfield.

"This first piece started out as a ballet, like many of the early 20th century pieces," said Pianist Andrew Santander. "As it happens with other ballet music, people have taken the most loved parts, so it is usually heard in a four-movement suite version in concert settings."

As the musicians played each piece, the crowd greeted the group with loud cheers of approval and admiring applause, all while looking forward to listening to more music as the concert continued.

Each piece took a different spin on classical music, including some of the most famous artists, such as Joseph Haydn.

"Haydn was born in the 1700s, and he was the first of the big three: Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven," said Santander. "In the time when Haydn is growing, is around the time we see the first piano being made, which is still quite a bit different from the modern piano, but nonetheless it's interesting to see that the people who wrote keyboard music back then tried to be kind of versatile about the music they were writing."

To lend diversity to the different music, the symphony played a traditional Christmas in the Caribbean piece that featured "O Tannenbaum."

"The Caribbean piece is going to be based on 'O Tannenbaum,'" said Santander. "You might hear another carol hopping through the bossa nova style."

Following the Caribbean pieces, the symphony played Christmas songs and encouraged the audience to join in and sing to the music, turning the chapel into a large scale caroling session.

The audience laughed

and joyfully sang along to well-known songs such as "Joy to the World," "O Come, All Ye Faithful" and "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," with the end of "Joy to the World" including a solo violin piece from Director Smith.

After audience members finished singing along, they were ready to hear the big finale of Saturday night's concert.

To conclude the event, the symphony played the famous song "We Three Kings" for the violin, piano and string orchestra.

The alteration on the song included the addition of sharp notes to give the music more tension and showed off the skills of solo violinist Martha Gardner.

Approval rang from the audience before the song concluded, and after the final note, everyone in attendance gave a standing ovation as they cheered.

The concert was part of the Union County Historical Society's Friday Night Concert Series. Due to a heating issue, it was moved from where it normally takes place at the Old Courthouse to the Rock Chapel.



Pianist Andrew Santander of the North Georgia Chamber Symphony. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

Christmas...from Page 1A



Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley with Nancy Harwood of the American Legion Auxiliary, Blairsville Police Chief Johnny Carroll and Mike Ayers of the American Legion. Photo by Mark Smith

about. We really enjoy working and doing good things in the community, and would like to have more people share that with us."

Maddox said the Rotary Club would be recognizing the Union County Schools Teachers of the Year at a meeting in January 2019.

Later in the day, Chief Carroll received yet another generous donation from the American Legion Family for \$500 for the Shop with a Cop Program.

The American Legion Family includes the American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of the American

Legion and the American Legion Riders.

The donation was presented by American Legion Ira Weaver Post 121 Commander Mike Ayers and American Legion Auxiliary President Nancy Harwood at Blairsville City Hall, with Mayor Jim Conley present.

Post 121 Senior Vice Commander Stephen Stratman was present as well.

"We feel we need to give back to the community as well as veterans," said Ayers.

Harwood noted that many people would recognize them as the group that does the poppy donations, adding that

those donations cover many veterans' initiatives, including purchasing firewood for those who need it.

"We also have a scholarship program through the Legion, and we attempt to give two scholarships every year to a veteran or someone related to a veteran," said Stratman, with Harwood adding that the scholarships can be for a two-year or four-year post-secondary program.

All three Legionnaires agreed that the Shop with a Cop program is a worthy Christmas cause.



The North Georgia Chamber Symphony performed at the Rock Chapel of First Baptist Blairsville on Friday, Nov. 30. Photo by Jarrett Whitener