

# ZUILL BAILEY

## CELLO

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### MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

#### Visitor shines as player, conductor

By TOM STRINI

Journal Sentinel music critic

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Guest conductor William Eddins opened Friday's Milwaukee Symphony concert as a musician among musicians: seated at the harpsichord, happily playing the continuo part to Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 3. He barely gave a nod to the 10 string players around him. Concertmaster Frank Almond set the pace, and Eddins didn't take over until he was needed, at the ends of the first and third movements.

This approach, both collegial and efficient, no doubt won Eddins admirers in the orchestra, as did his exquisite rendering of the brief interlude of a second movement, for harpsichord alone.

He moved up to the grand piano for Beethoven's Concerto for Piano, Violin and Cello, with Almond and guest **Zuill Bailey**.

This concerto called for a bigger presence on both podium and keyboard, and Eddins was more than up to both tasks. He led and played from memory and with great command, sometimes shaping orchestral phrases with one hand while playing the piano with the other.

Eddins had an idea about every phrase in a piece that, by Beethoven standards, is repetitive and a little bland. In Eddins' hands, the opening rustled in the basses and then the violins became like muttered thoughts before action, and the action of the ensuing principal theme became robust. In another gripping moment, Eddins finished his piano passage, sprung to his feet and added sudden, pendulous Anvil Chorus weight to a theme that could have passed unremarkably.

Almond played introspectively but with an intense focus that pulled in the ear. **The cello part is much more difficult and flamboyant, and Bailey played it precisely but with just the right sense of Romantic abandon.**

The evening of concertos ended with a thrilling account of Bartok's Concerto for Orchestra. Again, nothing passed thoughtlessly, as Eddins and his players invested in every bar. Thoughtful detail made the music vivid moment by moment and helped to drive it forward.

Eddins' keen sense of drama served Bartok well. The piece arose like a great beast from its slumber, in a low rumbling of the basses at the outset, rising to mutterings in the trumpets and finally a glowering statement in the massed violins. The eerily present woodwind bleatings and whirrings made the Elegy a surrealistic swamp in the middle of a velvet-dark night. And the wild, suddenly jazzy finale, with its odd, intimate moments and crazy, blurted reference to "Yankee Doodle," ended Bartok's last work with a sad, dying Hungarian's riotous vision of an alien New York.

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