

ZUILL BAILEY

CELLIST

INDIANAPOLIS STAR

ISO show offers debuts

Conductor, cellist bring strong performances to Conner Prairie venue

By Jay Harvey

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This weekend's "Symphony on the Prairie" audiences are being treated to two Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra debuts.

Friday night they got the bonus of a break in the weather as well, with the slightest of threats of rain vanishing as the cool air moved in.

Appearing for the first time as ISO guests were conductor Andrey Boreyko and cellist Zuill Bailey, both of whom made good on already strong credentials in the concert at Conner Prairie.

Bailey is being featured in Saint-Saens' Concerto No. 1 in A minor for his ISO debut.

The work rewards an impulsive virtuoso of his caliber. In Friday's performance, he established his mastery from the start with the cascading phrases of the soloist's opening statement.

Yet with the clarity of his figuration and the serene aplomb with which he dispatched the work's lyricism, Bailey put more than mere vigor into his interpretation.

And there was flawless coordination between soloist and orchestra, particularly in a muted, slightly mincing episode keyed to the strings, on top of which the soloist displayed some of his most fetching phrasing, and in the push and pull of tempos toward the end of the one-movement work.

Boreyko and the ISO opened the concert with a dashing account of Rimsky-Korsakov's "Russian Easter Overture." Apart from an unevenly judged slowing of tempo before the noble trombone melody, everything went smoothly, and the sound system's tendency to make the bass a little thumpy gradually receded. Boreyko played up the festive passages judiciously, never allowing the celebration to slide into runaway tempos. The solemnity of a Russian Easter was never far from the surface.

His interpretation of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 5 in E minor was just as keenly controlled. The initial statement of the "fate" motive was weighted with significance but not overdone. In the second movement, one of the great tunes in classical music had lots of life (as well as superb tone) breathed into it by first hornist Robert Danforth.

The third-movement waltz was sprightly with a fine measure of Tchaikovskyan dolor, and the finale -- when the fate motive is wrenched into an extended, broad-based triumph -- never became tiresome as renditions of it without insight often do.

Return visits by Boreyko and Bailey would be welcome, and Bailey's is already scheduled for next winter at the Hilbert Circle Theatre.

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