

CONCERT REVIEW

‘Young Romantics’
melodies are timeless

By **Jim Abbott**
MUSIC CRITIC

If romance is wasted on the young, no one told that to the composers featured in the Orlando Philharmonic's "Young Romantics" concert on Saturday at Bob Carr Performing Arts Centre.

The program featured staples of the 19th-century Romantic Era — the Overture from Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*, Schumann's Symphony No. 2 and Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 2 — that exude as much passion and youthful exuberance now as when composers conceived them.

The centerpiece Saturday was the piano concerto, featuring another "young romantic" of sorts, pianist Yekwon Sunwoo. Winner of the 2008 Florida International Piano Competition in Orlando, Sunwoo, 21, tackled the piece with equal amounts of verve and precision.

The former was evident in his flair for dynamic accents and his sense of timing on the pregnant pauses in the work that make the fleet-fingered bursts even more effective.

It was the first performance of the concerto for the orchestra, which teamed skillfully with the young pianist. Introduced by a stately interlude of brass and strings, the work showcased Chopin's famous sense of melody.

The piano most obviously dominated the spotlight in the second movement, with Sunwoo's delicate playing juxtaposed against the solitary embellishments of oboe and French horn. In the energetic third movement, built on a lilting mazurka-tinged rhythm, the full orchestra added hefty momentum.

Ultimately, though, this was a night for lovers of melody, and the orchestra set the tone by opening with the famous Rossini Overture. It was a joyous anthem powered by fanciful woodwinds above an insistent foundation of cellos and double basses.

By comparison, the Schumann Symphony was more complex — and more rewarding.

In Schumann's case, romance came at a higher cost. The symphony was composed in the wake of a nervous breakdown partly caused by his competition for critical acclaim with his pianist wife, Clara.

In that spirit, there's a tension at work beneath the engaging melodic lines.

It was only in the frisky fourth movement, delivered with jubilation in the orchestra's most powerful moment Saturday, that there was an inkling that love might emerge triumphant.

As for the music? Triumphant also would apply.

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KEN STEIN

The centerpiece at Saturday's "Young Romantics" was the concerto by pianist Yekwon Sunwoo, winner of the 2008 Florida International Piano Competition in Orlando.