



## Scotia Festival of Music on home stretch

### Passionate young artists show commitment to great works

By STEPHEN PEDERSEN  
Arts Reporter

Scotia Festival's young artists sank their teeth into Arnold Schoenberg's First Chamber Symphony on Thursday in the Dunn Theatre and bit hard.

The 15-instrument work, an early 20th century classic, is a tough read. Dense layers of counterpoint, Straussian harmonies, and mercurial motifs that sport through the texture like a school of porpoises in a gale, combine to create an ecstatic rush in this marvellous piece.

Conductor Ken Woods from the Cincinnati Conservatory marshalled the forces with admirable consistency, securely initiating tempos, shaping the endless flow of melody and instrumental acrobatics, and balancing the embarrassment of musical riches to clarify the main line. A brilliant job.

The festival's young artists, some of whom are advanced students, and others in the early years of their professional careers, played with the kind of ardency that goes with a passionate commitment to a great work.

Halifax french horn player Jane MacKay tackled the wide-ranging opening horn motif like —

### CONCERT REVIEW

Mario Andretti accelerating from zero to 300 kph in 10 or so seconds. MacKay is not a festival young artist, but she, together with SNS cellist Hilary Brown and SNS principal bassist Max Kasper cranked up their own first-class musicianship to bolster the fervent mood of the performance.

The program bounced all over the musical compass, from Dvorak to Poulenc to Scott Joplin to someone called Delerue, but, the Schoenberg aside, the most interesting music was that of young artist composers Jason Haney, Mark Williams (both represented by solo piano pieces) and Emily Doolittle (a string quartet). All study at Indiana University.

Haney's Refractions, based on the German carol Es Ist Ein Ros, was played by Alison d'Amato (Cleveland Institute). It contrasted agitated rhythms and ringing sonorities with an affect-

ing meditative melt down.

Doolittle's quartet, four short movements with descriptive titles (Contented, Tangled, Desolate, Dancing), demonstrated secure control over all the elements, especially in Tangled with its fascinating intertwining of lines.

Two of the four movements of Williams's Third Piano Sonata, Elegy and Scherzo, played by Lisa Campi (Eastman School), showed a breadth of musical vision — the ability to develop musical ideas over an extended time span — and a fascinating stubbornness and imagination in taking a severely restricted repeated note motif about as far as it could go.

Performances by a brass quintet of a work by Delerue called Vitrail, and of the Poulenc woodwind Sextuor, were well done, though rough in spots.

Two Joplin rags, The Entertainer and Maple Leaf Rag, provided a vaudeville turn for four double-basses — two young artists plus Max Kasper and festival master Lawrence Angell.

It was not Angell, however, but Kasper who fired up this ensemble with his spot-on intonation, perfectly focused tone and natural feel for the light, swinging tempos. Angell's sub-par performance — he played out of tune throughout, and his rhythm was sloppy — came as a bit of a shock. The man is the principal bass of the Cleveland Orchestra, one of the world's finest symphonies. I guess that even in Cleveland you can have a bad day.