

*Roswitha Masson, Reviewer*

Saturday February 28<sup>th</sup> - Penticton Cleland Theatre

Last Saturday's Okanagan Symphony concert "Passionate Friends" began with "Spirit Trail", an innovative work by Canadian composer Allan Bell. Conductor Rosemary Thomson suggested understanding the piece as a painting in sound. Rather than melodies the composition featured textures of sound with unusual instrumentations like contrabassoon and whistling. The music evoked images of snowdrifts, windswept grass-lands, and bird calls in a pristine Canadian wilderness.

One of the monuments of the symphonic repertoire, Brahms' Symphony in F Major No. 3 highlighted the great calibre of the Okanagan Symphony Orchestra. I especially enjoyed the expressive playing of the woodwind and brass sections in this concert. Brahms wrote his third symphony for his friend Robert Schumann's widow, Clara, on the occasion of her 64<sup>th</sup> birthday. Rich orchestration, romantic themes and intricate voicing characterise this beautiful, emotionally charged masterwork.

After the intermission guest artist Arnold Choi appeared with the orchestra to perform Dvorak's Concerto for Violoncello in B Minor. Arnold Choi began playing the cello at the age of five. He has appeared worldwide with many leading orchestras and is currently studying at the Colburn Conservatory of Music in Los Angeles. Choi described the Dvorak cello concerto as one of the most glorious moments in the cello repertoire.

Arnold Choi executed Dvorak's composition with great mastery of his instrument. The double stops, virtuosic scale and arpeggio passages and trills were performed with clarity and rich dynamic shadings. The blending with the orchestra felt very natural. The dark, velvety cello sound was complemented in transparent duets with flute and oboe and with harmonies of a French horn trio. There was a particular sweetness to Arnold Choi's playing that earned him many shouts of bravo and a standing ovation.

Regrettably this was the last Okanagan Symphony concert of the season here in Penticton. It has been a successful year with good attendance and wonderful music. Thank you to all the musicians, conductor Rosemary Thomson, volunteers and all others who make the concerts possible.