

Classical, jazz together at Wharton

Bridgette Redman, For the Lansing State Journal 6:18 p.m. EST November 20, 2014



(Photo: Lansing State Journal file photo)

When the music is good, it doesn't matter what genre it belongs to.

"It doesn't matter who wrote it, when or where," trumpeter Arturo Sandoval said. "If it is a good composition, it is a good composition."

So it is no stretch to see the Michigan State University College of Music mixing two of its performance groups on stage at the Wharton for an evening of Duke Ellington and Beethoven.

Tonight the Symphony Orchestra and the Jazz Orchestra will fill up Wharton Center's Cobb Great Hall stage to perform standout compositions of both classical and jazz.

"Working with the extraordinary students of our jazz program, led by Rodney Whitaker, has been a wonderful collaboration for the musicians of the MSU Symphony Orchestra," said Kevin Noe, the conductor of MSU's premier orchestral ensemble. "The energy that they bring to everything that they perform is inspiring, and we are fortunate to share the stage with them."

Whitaker is a bassist who directs the Jazz Orchestra, MSU's top jazz ensemble. He'll be joined by other jazz faculty members as guest soloists.

The concert billing includes Beethoven's Symphony No. 3, Ellington's "Harlem Suite" and Ellington's "Bula."

The four movement Beethoven symphony is also known as Italian Sinfonia Eroica, Heroic Symphony. The movements are Allegro con brio, Marcia funebre, Scherzo, and Finale. It is scored for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, three horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings.

"It challenged abandoned traditional molds of music creation and searched for new expression," said Noe. "The equally sophisticated and forward thinking works of the great master Duke Ellington, likewise, broke musical and cultural boundaries in both its compositional methods and its subject matter. We present these two progressive titans together in a spirit of heroic collaboration that we hope will benefit both."

Harlem Suite was Ellington's first major extended work that was intended for performance by a symphony orchestra.

•**Classical Meets Jazz**, 8 p.m. today, Cobb Great Hall, Wharton Center, MSU campus, \$10, www.whartoncenter.com or music.msu.edu. Students and those under 18 are free.

Act II: Chamber Music at Absolute Gallery

The Absolute Gallery in Lansing's Old Town is all about creating an experience around art.

Since 2009, Kathy Holcomb's gallery has been the home to a chamber series where patrons can enjoy classical chamber music in a European style. Richard Sherman, an MSU professor of flute and a performer in the Lansing and Jackson symphonies, founded the series as a way of combining music, art and hospitality in an intimate, informal setting.

The Absolute Gallery transforms into a 100-seat performance hall which is small but has superior acoustics. Each concert in the series features internationally known chamber musicians and patrons are surrounded by works of art while sitting only a few feet from the performers. Following the show, the Gallery serves light refreshments during a meet and greet with the artists.

Tonight's concert will feature the music of Saint-Saens, Franck and Faure in a concert called "Ars Gallica": Societe Nationale de Musique (1871-1891). The chamber performers are Suren Bagratuni on cello, Sherman on flute and Debra Moriarty on piano. The concert guide is WKAR's Jody Knol.

The title takes its name from the society founded in 1871 to promote French orchestral music and provide a forum for young composers. Its motto was "Ars gallica." Saint-Saens was one of the two founders and Franck and Faure were early members.

•**Absolute Gallery chamber concert**: 8 p.m. today, doors open at 7 p.m. General admission tickets: \$15 at the door, \$16 online at www.AbsoluteMusicLansing.org and \$5 for students.