

OPINION

Baldwin composition for symphony orchestra inspiring

The Northwest Iowa Symphony Orchestra performed Saint-Saëns' Third Symphony, with Mary-Lou Wielenga as featured organist, at its spring concert Tuesday evening in B.J. Haan Auditorium on the campus of Dordt College in Sioux Center.

Better known as Saint-Saëns' "Organ Symphony," the emotionally powerful piece has always been one of my classical favorites. I played a CD of the rousing second movement so many times in my pickup I wore the disk out. I really believed the moving piece, which was the third selection on the program, would be the highlight of the evening.

But I was in for a surprise. To its credit, the orchestra — especially the highly capable



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brass section and organist Ms. Wielenga — was brilliant in a performance that was uplifting and inspiring. But the highlight of the evening was "Lauda," a new fanfare for orchestra and organ by Dr. Daniel Baldwin, an assistant adjunct who teaches music composition at Dordt's music department. Dr. Baldwin's well-thought-out piece bursts open with a brass fanfare as would be expected by the title. But it is more than just a

salute to life by loud trumpets, French horn and trombones. Supported boldly by Dordt's large and powerful organ, the lengthy piece is a fine dish of soft and enchanting melodies, bright, fast-paced moments from the strings, comforting themes from the woodwinds and at least two repeat performances of the opening fanfare. It features an ongoing sense of being I didn't want to ever stop. The constant presence of the hymn "Praise the Lord, the Almighty," played exclusively by the organ weaves its way through the entire performance.

At the close of the evening, as the last strains of Saint-Saëns' symphony faded into memory I quietly wished the orchestra would offer an encore of Baldwin's "Lauda." I

can only hope Dordt's recording of the performance will be offered for sale to the public in the near future.

"I very much enjoy writing for an orchestra," Baldwin told me when I introduced myself following the concert.

"It's always nice to work with a conductor who is interested in performing new music," Baldwin said. "After all, Beethoven, Brahms and Saint-Saëns were all once living composers looking for people to give their music a chance!"

Baldwin went on to share some interesting details about "Lauda." It was his first attempt at writing for organ. The outcome wouldn't have been possible if MaryLou Wielenga and John MacInnis hadn't taken the time to give

him separate master classes on writing for organ.

"It is a wonderful instrument, often called the King of Instruments," Baldwin shared, and he looks forward to another composing for organ opportunity in the future.

Baldwin said he has other orchestral works in progress including concertos for tuba, cello, alto saxophone and oboe. He also expects to write a tone poem for symphony called "Atlantis." The piece is inspired by the lost city of Atlantis. He additionally is working on an orchestral suite based on the book of Genesis titled "Of Heaven and Earth."

Dr. Baldwin was born in 1978 in Blackwell, OK. His music has been described as "epic," "refreshingly beautiful," "gorgeous and moving"

and "beautifully inspired." His compositions have been performed in Canada, Italy, Germany, Japan, China, Belgium and Australia as well as the United States.

Baldwin holds the degrees of bachelor of music in education from Northwestern Oklahoma State University, a master of music in composition with an emphasis in wind band conducting from Kansas State University, and a doctor in musical arts in composition with an emphasis in orchestral conducting from the University of Nebraska in Lincoln.

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