

Pianist cancels, but Beach Cities Symphony plays on

By Kari Sayers

Concertgoers who arrived at Mar-see Auditorium on the El Camino College campus Oct. 28 to hear the Beach Cities Symphony's featured soloist were met with disappointment.

Pianist Anli Lin Tong, a graduate of Juilliard, was to play Hungarian composer Bela Bartok's Piano Concerto No. 3. But appearing onstage for his pre-concert talk, maestro Barry Brisk announced that although Lin Tong had played her way through a great rehearsal the night before, she had come down with the flu and had to send her regrets.

It was the first time in the orchestra's 62-year history that a featured

soloist and a major work had to be canceled, according to board member Peter Landecker.

A replacement could not be found at such short notice. But the concert was not entirely devoid of soloists. The opening piece, "Le Tombeau de Couperin" by Maurice Ravel, affords several of the orchestra members solo parts.

Unfortunately, the performance was not as polished as one could wish for. The violin section was especially shaky, but Brisk often made the orchestra hold back to a pianissimo, to provide a soft blanket on which the soloists could spin and twirl.

Principal oboe Larry Tunick elicited a beautiful tone from his instru-

ment and made the work into a veritable oboe concerto. But even the harp got its five seconds of fame as did other instruments.

Ravel first composed the piece in six movements for piano in 1917, each movement a tribute to a friend who had died in World War I. He later orchestrated four movements for orchestra — Prelude and three dances: Forlane, Menuet and Rigaudon.

In the Menuet, in particular, it is obvious that the French composer borrowed phrases from Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg's dances. This reviewer's favorite was the Rigaudon, with the brass and woodwinds, including the oboe, vying for attention.

After intermission, which included a short ceremony to honor BCS founding member Elaine M. Hunter by naming the concertmaster's chair in her memory, the orchestra concluded the concert with Tchaikovsky's "Suite from Swan Lake."

Composed in 1876, "Swan Lake" was Tchaikovsky's first ballet (the next two were "Sleeping Beauty" and "The Nutcracker"), and the suite, a series of scenes from the ballet, opens with the most tuneful and gorgeous theme in the entire classical canon, played beautifully by the wailing oboe against shimmering strings. A waltz follows and then the familiar dances of the swans.

Here, Liesl Erman's celestial harp

shined in a short cadenza that led into a duet with Rebecca Rutkowski's violin, followed by an elegant solo by Rutkowski against pizzicato strings. Rutkowski certainly cut a fine Princess Odette turned into a white swan.

The final scene swells into a bombastic crescendo and ends on a melancholy note from the harp, indicating at first the drowning of the prince and the princess and then their final flight toward heaven.

Beach Cities Symphony's next concert is set for Jan. 27, at the same venue. It will feature cellist Jerome Kessler in Elgar's Cello Concerto, and music by Tchaikovsky and Beethoven.

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