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The Michigan Daily


Pops' Gershwin concert promises 'S'Wonderful' entertainment

By Valerie Lapinski
Daily Arts Writer

When Woody Allen needed an overture to portray his love affair with New York in Manhattan, what could have been more perfect than the music of Gershwin? George Gershwin has influenced American pop culture since his ingenious melding of jazz and classical music exploded in the '20s and '30s. This Sunday, to celebrate his 100th birthday, the Michigan Pops Orchestra will reveal its own love affair by performing an all-Gershwin concert.

Steve Bizub, a School of Music senior and the orchestra's conductor, said, "When you think of great pops music, Gershwin was the guy who really started to infiltrate popular music into the concert hall. It's very nice to finally be able to do an all Gershwin concert."

Bizub has done his own share of bringing popular music into the concert halls of the University. Three years ago as a freshman, he was asked by a fellow student to try and put together a Pops Orchestra. Through months of preparing for the first concert, Bizub found himself advancing from assistant conductor to conducting the entire program.

PREVIEW	
	<p>Michigan Pops Orchestra</p> <p>Power Center Sunday at 4 p.m.</p>

Composed of about 65 undergraduate and graduate students from various schools of the University, the orchestra boasts a variety of talents. This spring's ensemble has a special advantage because most of the members performed together in last fall's "No Theme" concert.

"It's been great because we have a concert under our belts together," Bizub said. "I'd like to think that we sound a good deal better than we did last semester."

The extra experience will come in handy in performing the challenging work of Gershwin. The orchestra's program for Sunday includes the famous "Rhapsody in Blue," featuring School of Music pianist Sam Davis, and excerpts from "Porgy and Bess," Gershwin's experiment with opera.

Also included is "An American in Paris," Gershwin's "symphonic poem" about a lonely American walking the streets of Paris in the '20s. Complete with actual taxi horns to emulate the sounds of city traffic, the piece combines French musical influences with American jazz and blues.

Gershwin composed many musical numbers for Broadway and Hollywood before dying tragically at the age of 38 from a brain tumor. He produced such hits as "Someone to Watch Over Me," "S'Wonderful," "I Got Rhythm" and "Our Love is Here to Stay."

The Gershwin concert marks the end of Bizub's direction of the orchestra, "which I will dearly miss," Bizub said. He is happy to have been part of the group's success since its establishment in 1995.

The Pops Orchestra has performed the works of John Williams and other film composers as well as some opera and classical selections.

"I'm proud to say that everything we've performed has wonderful musical merits," Bizub said. "Most of the musicians are not getting credit for this," Bizub explained. "Many are not aspiring to be professional musicians; they're only doing it for the experience and the music."

Dave Ostreicher, Engineering junior and the orchestra's program director said, "I like the fact that there's an opportunity to play orchestral music that is open to non-music majors, whether it be for credit or not."

The appeal of the orchestra is the spirit of its members. Since it's a student-run organization, the members have a say in how the orchestra works.

"That's the fun part of the job, to decide what's going on. A lot of it has to do with what the orchestra wants to play, trying to keep everybody happy. You have to make sure you're satisfying the players and the audience," Bizub said.

Certainly a joyous birthday celebration of Gershwin's music will satisfy both the members of the orchestra and its listeners on Sunday night.

"I don't know if you can get any more American than George Gershwin," Bizub said.

- Tickets are \$7 for adults and \$5 for students. Call MUTO at 763-TKTS for information.

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