

## *The Vindicator*

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### ENTERTAINMENT

#### SYMPHONY REVIEW

## Vocalist's appearance highlights third pops concert

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*Craig Schulman's fourth recent appearance supported the historical order.*

By ROBERT ROLLIN  
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YOUNGSTOWN – The Youngstown Symphony presented its third pops concert Saturday evening with the return appearance of renowned high tenor Craig Schulman, a versatile and engaging vocalist.

Schulman has had a remarkably varied career ranging from grand opera to Broadway title appearances as Jean Valjean in “Les Miserables,” as Jekyll and Hyde in the musical of the same name, and as The Phantom in “The Phantom Of The Opera.” His one grand opera selection from Tosca elicited great audience enthusiasm.

Isaiah Jackson's intelligent hand could be detected in program organization, amounting to an encapsulated history of 20<sup>th</sup>-century light music, from its Viennese roots in Franz Lehar, American sources in Sigmund Romberg and Gershwin, through the wonderful mid-century musicals of Porter, Rodgers and Hammerstein, and Lerner and Loewe, and finally in the recent stylings of Lloyd Webber and Claude-Michel Schönberg.

**Instrumental selections:** The symphony played four instrumental selections. Beginning with the marvelous tunes of Lehar's “Merry Widow Overture,” Jackson reminded the audience that the roots of American show music come from Vienna. Throughout the overture, the orchestra played with good ensemble and balance, and brought out what

Jackson described as “a blend of waltzes and can-cans” with an added touch of janissary music.

All sections played equally well in master composer/arranger Robert Russell Bennett's medley of Gershwin songs, which included “Nice Work If You Can Get It,” “My Love Is Here To Stay,” and “They Can't Take That Away From Me,” among others. Bennett's equally well-orchestrated selections from Lerner and Loewe's “Gigi” rose to nice moments in “Thank Heaven For Little Girls,” the old Maurice Chevalier standard, but overall seemed a bit shapeless in comparison to the Gershwin.

Lloyd Webber's “Jesus Christ Superstar Overture” had an interesting section of 5/8 that the orchestra tossed off perfectly, a fabulous string sound in the tuttis, and tasteful solos by principal oboe Carey Shinbaum and keyboardist Dominic Ciarniello.

**Vocalist:** Schulman's own numbers also supported the historical order. In the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century set, his performance of the universally known “Serenade” from “The Student Prince” was outstanding, as were his expressively intimate croonings in Gershwin's “Love Walked In” and Porter's “Where Is The Life That Late I Led,” but it was in the late 20<sup>th</sup>-century musical selections that he got his greatest response.

In “Bring Him Home” from “Les Miserables” and “Music Of The Night” from The Phantom, his vocal nuances and stage gestures reached amazing expressive heights. Schulman showed himself to be a consummate artist at the height of his powers.

Before his encore, Schulman mentioned that this was his fourth appearance here, and that Isaiah Jackson and the orchestra are exceptional Youngstown treasures. Judging from the immediate audience response, the community agrees.