

**Queensland Youth Orchestras
2014 Finale
QPAC Concert Hall, Brisbane
Saturday November 1, 2014**

- (by Patricia Kelly)

IN a world that grows more violent and aggressive as each year passes, it did the heart good to experience the seven groups of Queensland Youth Orchestra presenting their 2014 Finale at QPAC Concert Hall, to savor the art of these young performers who cast their individual talents into the common orchestral pool to make inspiring music for the sheer joy of doing it.

Lucky were those in the crowded Concert Hall who shared this evening of extraordinary music-making that summarised QYO's 2014 packed performance program. But that was only part of the total activities undertaken by this orchestral entity during the year, both in Brisbane and throughout Queensland. While the stage was being prepared for each ensemble, QYO executive committee past-president Collin Myers' entertaining commentary detailed these extracurricular activities, giving concerts, working with young student musicians in regional areas.

Seeing the various groups perform one after another in this concert was a cogent reminder of the enormous growth of this enterprise begun in 1966 by conductor John Curro. It has been an almost mind-boggling expansion from those humble beginnings. Curro's dedication and strength is testimony to his musicianship, leadership and unwavering zeal, and to the patient skill of QYO's administrative staff and pool of volunteers who handle the logistics of hundreds of players and performances each year.

The discipline and faithful application of the players was obvious as wave after wave of quality music floated from the groups, opening with Big Band's suave tones under conductor Rafael Karlen whose composition "Then and There" was premiered with Kelsey Giarola providing the vocalise. She then followed in the steps of stars such as Frank Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald to give an upbeat rendition of "Too Close for Comfort" from a 1956 Sammy Davis Jr. musical. The mood was set.

Conductor Chen Yang led Junior String Ensemble players through lovingly-phrased lyricism in "Polovtsian Dances" by Borodin, with its signal melody that became popular as "Stranger in Paradise." American composer Ticheli's "Blue Shades" was an interpretative challenge for conductor David Law as he kept sharp control of his Wind Ensemble working through its contrasting styles and moods.

The Wind Symphony conducted by Warwick Potter glided competently from one master to another, the daring moto perpetuo minimalist drive of John Adams' "Short Ride in a Fast Machine" to the broad explosive sweeps of "Candide Overture" by the incomparable Leonard Bernstein.

The final three items began with the spirited fourth movement from Dvorak's "Symphony No 9 - From the New World" performed by QYO 3 conducted with sure command by Bradley Voltz. The crisp development from small beginnings to the definitive "Gaudeamus Igitur" ("Let us Rejoice while we have youth") that ended Brahms' "Academic Festival Overture" was clearly outlined by Sergei Korschmin conducting QYO 2.

When John Curro closed the show conducting Queensland Youth Symphony in two movements from Respighi's "Church Windows," the full scale of this entire enterprise exploded with a mighty force. Klais organ rumbles were just part of the blaze of glorious, thunderous tone that almost rocked the Concert Hall as Respighi's vibrant imagery captured the grandeur of stained glass window images of St Michael Archangel and Pope Gregory the Great in churches of Rome. Layer upon thrilling layer of music sprinkled with motifs of Gregorian chant that Gregory is credited with creating poured forth, imaging memories of Christendom's distant glory days. The effect was electric. A 'Wow!' moment writ large.

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