

## Park's love of violin evident at concert

By **ROBERT BONNER**  
For The Republic

“**L**OVE is in the Air,” was the theme for the Columbus Indiana Philharmonic’s April 27 musical love fest of passionate players with guest artist Susie Park, internationally acclaimed violin virtuoso.

Love expressed musically, flowed from the Erne Auditorium stage at Columbus North High School in trickles and torrents, waves and floods leaving an enthralled audience fulfilled.

Before the music, David Bowden, the Philharmonic’s conductor-director, hosted Musically Speaking, the conductor’s pre-concert chat with Park, the evening’s guest. Attendees were even more enriched by the evening’s music, after having listened to her remarks.

Admittedly a spontaneous



PHOTO BY CHRIS CRAWL

Internationally touring violinist Susie Park performs with the Columbus Indiana Philharmonic.

player, she delights in expressing passages a little differently in the moment than as rehearsed. Indeed it was this element of visually engaged nuance between soloist and orchestra musicians that gave

triumph to much of the evening’s music. In his pre-concert comments, Bowden suggested that in this setting he would rather be identified as a facilitator than a conductor. He did step back a bit from his usual command where appropriate to allow the musicians to engage intimately with the course of expressive phrasing from Park.

The Philharmonic opened with “Don Juan, Tone Poem,” the composition that launched Richard Strauss into fame as a prolific composer. Bowden initially identified melodic themes used in the musical poem, by having various instruments demonstrate short themes which illustrated Don Juan, a young man with outrageous perfectionist ideals in his search for the faultless woman. Other motifs depicted Don Juan’s moodiness, whether by a French horn section rendering a flamboyant fanfare

with scary meticulousness, by oboe or trumpet displaying other moods, or the violin solo depicting a serene love melody.

Next appeared Park in a lovely rose-magenta gown to offer the “Romance for Violin” by Antonin Dvorak. As her tranquil opening built to lush crescendos, one would almost sense that her embraced violin was not an appendage, but a very part of her being as she caressed difficult passages with unassuming facility. Electrifying the atmosphere was a subdued crimson lighting surrounding the orchestra.

Park reappeared to perform the “Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso” by Camille Saint-Saens. Intimate soloist to orchestra communication allowed the violinist to lovingly convey passion, every note blossoming as no less important than any other note. Dr. Bowden said “Like the greatest violinists of the past, there is

nothing she can’t do technically on the instrument, which frees her interpretively to do whatever is in her heart.”

Park soulfully expresses music, as was so evident in the sweet sounds which she coaxed from her gloriously resonant violin. With but only mellifluous and warm clear tones by seeming effortless, she manipulated bow over strings, every note flawlessly tuned.

Following intermission, Bowden paused in reflective repose a bit to allow a focus for the music the instrumentalists were beholden to. Pyotr Tchaikovsky’s “Romeo and Juliet,” the monumental and gorgeous score with large sonorities countered by subdued themes with delicate phrasings presented a challenge to even this fine orchestra. The soloist winds struggled a bit at first, but initial insecurities soon were overcome and the orchestra waxed

confident with a commanding performance.

Boldly tackling Pablo de Sarasate’s “Carmen Fantasy for Violin,” one of the most challenging works in the entire violin repertoire, Park scaled this show-piece mountain with confidence.

Compelled by a standing ovation, Park proffered the “Partita for solo violin No.3 in E Major” by Johann Sebastian Bach. Her exuberant and cheery musical offering was virtually flawless.

Thank you Columbus Indiana Philharmonic and Susie Park for your expressions of love, as well as to each corporate sponsor whose contributions made this marvelous evening now a loving memory.

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*Robert Bonner has played trumpet with the Fort Wayne Philharmonic and other central Indiana orchestras.*