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East Carolina University Symphony Orchestra Features Hye-Jin Kim, Violin

By Judith N. Barber

GREENVILLE, NC — The ECU Symphony Orchestra concert began with the Prelude from the opera *Macbeth* by Giuseppe Verdi, led by graduate student Leonardo Perez. This may have been his conducting debut, since he recently completed a master's degree in violin performance at the University of Southern California. Although the transition from string section to conductor's desk can be daunting, Perez satisfactorily led the orchestra through this brief dramatic opener.

The evening's centerpiece was violinist Hye-Jin Kim's performance of Max Bruch's "Scottish Fantasy," Op. 46. Ms. Kim, recently appointed Assistant Professor of Violin at the ECU School of Music, brings with her a considerable resume of achievement. **But it was her superb interpretation of the fantasy's old Scottish melodies, by turns lyrical, joyful, and dazzling, that won the hearts of her audience.**

Although Bruch drew on humble resources, the score's challenges become evident in the lightly scored sections. At one point, for example, the texture is reduced to a flute and violin duet, and the orchestra's flutist confidently shadowed Ms. Kim's lead. Later, the violin solo has an embellished line over the theme, played by the first horn. Such passages are fraught with opportunities for missteps for the horn player, but the line was performed beautifully. Throughout the work, ECUSO conductor Jorge Richter drew out the best from his students, who played with convincing maturity. Audience appreciation was immediate and enthusiastic for Hye-Jin Kim, Dr. Richter, and the orchestra, expressed by a sustained standing ovation at the close of the piece.

Following intermission, the orchestra concluded their tripartite nod to the Scots with Symphony No. 3 in A minor, Op. 56, "Scottish," by Felix Mendelssohn. The group played well, but the spectacular Bruch performance was still so strongly in mind that the Mendelssohn seemed to stand in its shadow.

This concert took place in Wright Auditorium on the campus of East Carolina University. Stage lighting seemed to be a problem, Ms. Kim was in shadow and the orchestra was under-lit. Draconian budget cuts have dimmed hopes for a new performing arts center at ECU, but the lighting situation was a reminder that a new facility will be greatly appreciated if and when it materializes.