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### MUSIC REVIEW: IU PHILHARMONIC

## Bartok piece executed precisely, with energy, in final fall concert

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By Peter Jacobi  
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The brasses and woodwinds went home at intermission, their work done. The percussionists stayed. One of three harpists stuck around, too, as did the pianist and celesta player. As for the strings: They multiplied. Fifty-three had been on stage in the Musical Arts Center for the first half of Tuesday evening's program. Another 47 joined them.

All that shifting of personnel occurred on behalf of what the IU Philharmonic had prepared itself to perform as windup for the final concert of the fall orchestra season on campus, prepared itself, of course, with the guidance of its intrepid leader, conductor David Efron.

The work that necessitated these maneuverings: Bela Bartok's remarkable Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta, which also requires this mass of string players to be divided into two ensembles. Across four movements and about 30 minutes, thanks to the composer, these ensembles interact ingeniously, massaging a single theme that continues to surprise the listener for its many and manifold configurations. The percussionists — employing drums, cymbals, timpani, xylophone, tam-tam, and what have you — span the rear to provide rhythmic seasoning.

Bartok's music is eerie, often agitated, sometimes furtive, dark. Stanley Kubrick used some of it for the soundtrack of "The Shining," his disturbing film based on the Stephen King story of madness gone berserk. The score is spellbinding, but only if those who communicate it in the concert hall do the piece justice. Efron and his multitude most assuredly did, having prepared a reading of translucent textures, precise execution and explosive energy.

Pre-intermission, with the Philharmonic in a more normal state of being, the focus was on music of Amilcare Ponchielli and Eduard Lalo. Ponchielli's "Dance of the Hours," within the confines of the opera it was written for, "La Gioconda," represents a divertissement amidst a plot of multiple dastardly deeds. Separated from the opera, the music holds sufficient personality and zest to keep an orchestra on its collective toes and give an audience enjoyment. And, of course, for those weaned on Walt Disney's "Fantasia," it can conjure dancing ostriches, elephants and hippos. Conducting student James Reeves governed a razor-sharp and also charismatic performance.

A fine soloist took the spotlight for the Lalo D Minor Cello Concerto, he being Francisco Vila, an obviously gifted performer diploma candidate studying with Sharon Robinson and Janos Starker. The young man revealed expert control of his instrument; there were no rasps or notes otherwise compromised. Tonal production was solid and resonant. And whether Lalo's music called for the robust or lyrical or pyrotechnical, Vila was in command, while also managing to infuse this often fragrantly romantic music with character and flair. Efron and the orchestra capably backed his efforts.

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