

Music Review: 'Quark' premiere

By Peter Jacobi, H-T Reviewer

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"The depictions and accounts presented in this work are solely those of the composer," wrote Don Freund in program notes prepared for the world premiere of his "Exotic Particles and the Confinement of Quarks" at the Musical Arts Center Tuesday evening, "and in no way," he continued, "is the IU Department of Physics responsible for their accuracy."

It is a droll comment about an inventive gambit on Freund's part. Seems he heard IU Physics Professor Alex Dzierba's Distinguished Faculty Research Lecture last spring, sporting that same title, "Exotic Particles and the Confinement of Quarks." And he learned all about those infinitesimal bits of puzzlement and animation that pulse within the boundaries of a proton. The experience led Freund's fertile imagination to "expand the world of the quark billions of billions of billions of times" and to create an eight-minute tone poem about the frenzy of activity that goes on all around us in the physical universe.

Well, why not? And apparently physicist Dzierba didn't mind; he was present when the IU Wind Ensemble took on and conquered the results. He was present and took a bow when beckoned to by Freund who was accepting approval from the audience for what had just transpired: that first ever performance of what turned out to be a mesmerizing piece, most skillfully crafted and evocative of tiny, tinkling movements and of powerful forces at work and of collisions. Freund's instrumentation is always resourceful, and it surely was here: one could envision all that frenzy going on constantly within those immeasurably restrictive confines of the mysterious, minuscule proton.

Freund wrote his "Exotic Particles" for Ray Cramer, the long time, soon to retire head of the School of Music's Department of Bands and the conductor of the Wind Ensemble. The composition is a gift from friend to departing friend. Cramer and his players certainly gave the music the excellent, totally organized performance it deserved.

But then, that seemed to be the case throughout the evening, not only when Cramer stood atop the podium but two young conductors studying with him at the graduate level. One has come to expect music making of the highest order from this most senior ensemble in the band division, from this Philharmonic of winds. And one had expectation matched by realization.

Master's candidate Will Petersen who, when he wasn't conducting on Tuesday, filled a seat in the tuba section, led the players in four nostalgic bonbons from Robert Russell Bennett's 1979 "Autobiography for Band," the composer's response to requests he write an autobiography about his distinguished career. Instead of words, he said, he'd use music. The music holds charm.

For doctoral candidate Chad Nicholson, the task undertaken was more daunting: the performance of Vittorio Giannini's 1961 full-scale Symphony No. 3, a richly orchestrated, well crafted score that undoubtedly required a gob of rehearsal time. The music is friendly in its accessible modernism. What it lacks is substantive glue that would cause the music to stick to one's memory.

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