

AU orchestra concert set for Saturday evening

12/02/04

Alfred University's orchestra, under the direction of Dr. Lisa Lantz, will present its only concert of the 2004-2005 academic year at 8 p.m. Saturday (Dec. 4) in Holmes Auditorium, Harder Hall, on the Alfred University campus. The concert is only one for the year because Lantz will be on sabbatical during the spring semester. Saturday's concert will feature four pieces. The first is "The Bacchanale" from the opera Samson and Delilah, first presented in Paris in 1890. Written by Camille Saint-Saen, the opera's popularity has not matched that of "The Bacchanale," although it is considered the composer's first theatrical success. The piece opens with woodwinds creating images of flowing veils of a dancer, images that students Amy Bateman and Danielle Smith, both sophomore fine arts majors, will bring to life. They are members of the AU Middle Eastern Dance Organization. The second piece, Gustav Holst's Mars features the brittle sound of the wooden surface of a violin bow striking metal, rather than the more usual sound of the bow being drawn across the strings. The sound introduces the French horn and other brass instruments, and the rhythm is adopted by the timpani and other instruments as the piece progresses. The sounds evoke images of war: pounding feet, smashing bombs and grinding tanks. The third piece is the more familiar "Blue Danube" by Johann Strauss. At its peak, "Blue Danube" was a phenomenal success, outselling every other piece of sheet music. Konzertstück by Schumann is the finale. Performances of Konzertstück are uncommon, with critics suggesting that the difficulty of the first horn part makes it too challenging for many performers. The piece opens with the piano and clarinet, then the melody passes to the first horn, played by senior Francis Knickmeyer. The notes are high and demanding. Pianist David Peter Coppen will perform Konzertstück with the orchestra. He has been a frequent guest artist with the AU orchestra, performing concertos by Grieg, Rachmaninoff and Addinsell. Coppen and Lantz have a long history of working together. Lantz, according to Coppen, unlocks the difficulties of a composition in a way that empowers him, as a performer, to bring out his full musical potential. The concert will mark the final performance of their AU careers for two seniors. Terry Seyfried, a biology major, will be leaving Alfred University for graduate school - she plans to pursue a Ph.D. in immunology - and marriage to AU alumnus Dan Thayer, a member of the class of 2003. Seyfried began her musical career in fourth grade, playing flute. She also plays penny whistle and dulcimer, but is featured in the orchestra on bassoon. Knickmeyer, an environmental studies major, started playing trumpet in elementary school but switched, as the suggestion of her band director, to French horn. Concert-goers will hear her perform in both Konzertstück and Mars. (Note to editors: photos are available by e-mail. Please call 607 871 2103 or e-mail goetschius@alfred.edu to request them. One shows Lisa Lantz and David Peter Coppen examining the score for Konzertstück and the other shows Amy Bateman in her Middle Eastern dance costume.)