

MUSIC REVIEW

ASO's 'Magic City' well crafted

By MICHAEL HUEBNER
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A world premiere, a conductor on his way up the ladder, and an emerging star took center stage at Thursday night's Alabama Symphony Orchestra concert at the Alys Stephens Center.

Dorothy Hindman, who teaches at Birmingham-Southern College, has produced a very likable 10-minute overture in "Magic City." Inspired by her adopted home, she paints a musical canvas that vividly suggests expansiveness and city bustle. Repeated notes and overlapping phrases set the backdrop for the work's well-crafted orchestration. The work's musical language, a combination of Paul Hindemith with the trendy minimalism of Philip Glass and John Adams, reveals little in the way of innovation, but the two work surprisingly well together.

Guest conductor Grant Llewelyn focused on the work's rhythmic interplay, towering brass figures and sculptural sound masses, which added greatly to its sonic imagery and dramatic tension.

Llewelyn, who took over as music director of the Boston-based Handel and Haydn Society from Christopher Hogwood 20 months ago, led the orchestra in two works by Beethoven. Like ASO music director Richard Westerfield, he is a protege of Seiji Ozawa and has

★★★

Alabama Symphony Orchestra.
Grant Llewelyn, guest
conductor; Livia Sohn,
violinist.
Music by Hindman
and Beethoven.

Thursday
 Alys Stephens Center
 Program repeats in part today at
 11 a.m.

served as assistant conductor at the Boston Symphony.

The fashionably fast, but rigidly classical reading of Beethoven's Symphony No. 2 emphasized the English-born conductor's historically informed side. The ASO kept up with the quick tempos, but too many of the score's nuances were left in the dust. Suppler shadings are called for, even with so-called authentic performances.

If the symphony leaned stylis-

tically toward the classical period, the Violin Concerto set its gaze on romanticism.

At 24, violinist Livia Sohn has amassed nearly as much repertoire as violinists twice her age. So it was no surprise that her Beethoven was delivered with such surety.

This was a true partnership between orchestra and soloist, and each partner was allowed to breathe freely. In the two years since I last heard Sohn play, she has matured well beyond her years. The note-perfect fastidiousness of youth has been replaced with a limber expressiveness, especially apparent in the first and third movement cadenzas. The swaying lyricism in the Larghetto struck a nearly balletic balance between the musical forces, the robust, edgy playing in the Rondo inspiring. Sohn's luxuriantly toned 1774 J. B. Guadagnini violin, on loan from the Kumho Group of Seoul, added that much more depth.