

# MSO helps to kick off UniverCity events in style

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## REVIEW

MUNCIE — UniverCity got off to a great start Sunday night at Emens Auditorium, thanks to the Muncie Symphony Orchestra.

The MSO shined during this eclectic performance, the orchestra's first of the season.

The 2-hour concert featured several guests, including well-known actor Danny Glover. But the symphony, under the direction of Leonard Atherton, and the pieces written by local composers stole this show.

Blaine Brownell, president of Ball State University, was master of ceremonies.

The "Who We Are ... America Risen" concert was enjoyed by a full house — a nice mix of children and adults (many were MSO first-timers).

The MSO, joined by the White River Youth Choir and visiting Okazaki Jousel High School Choir, opened the concert with *The Star-Spangled Banner*.

The beautiful theme of UniverCity, written by WBST production manager Brian Eckstein, followed. *Community Fanfare* builds from one note,

which Eckstein said is true of a community. The week-long UniverCity features speakers, programs and exhibits that focus on community issues.

Talented youth choirs sang the inspiring lyrics.

The tone was less energetic in Barber's *Adagio for Strings*, a slow, weepy piece that Brownell called a remembrance for those affected by the events of Sept. 11.

A very impressive piece of music was performed next. *We Stand for Freedom*, written by Ball State University music faculty member David Stern, was quite simply music that every American needs to hear. The music, Stern said, was written as a response to 9-11. A lot of ground was covered, from the mournful beginning elegy featuring strings to a triumphant empowering section adding the horns and wind instruments, to the powerful, reaffirming ending that featured what appeared to be every member of the orchestra as well as some perfectly placed fire truck bells (played on the triangle).

Peter Boyer's *Celebration*

*Overture* was a perfect complement to Stern's piece. The music exploded with energy. It was indeed a celebratory piece, complete with a fast-paced piano solo and some fancy string and horn work.

After a brief intermission, Glover was introduced and the orchestra began Copland's *Lincoln Portrait*.

The work combines music with spoken word, actual excerpts from Abraham Lincoln's speeches. Glover, who later said he was a big fan of the piece, narrated with great poise. Glover delivered each line clearly and at all the right moments (thanks to Atherton's cues).

Glover, who is known for his roles in the *Lethal Weapon* movies as well as *The Color Purple* and *Places In the Heart*, then took center stage alone to answer questions about his successful film career and receive accolades from audience members.

Glover said he chose *Lincoln Portrait* because we "need to hear inspirational words" during times like these.

Contact arts and entertainment reporter Michelle Kinsey at 213-5822.

★ Those who heard David Stern's excellent composition, *Stand for Freedom*, at Sunday's Muncie Symphony Orchestra concert have a suggestion for MSO and Ball State officials: Help draw national attention to the piece by Stern, a music faculty member. "It ought to be played by major symphony orchestras each year during Sept. 11 events," said one MSO patron. Stern wrote the music in response to the terrorist attacks.