Concert comes alive for kids

By Drahm Domengue
Entertainment Editor

Batman, the Lone Ranger, and Superman were in town Wednesday. But if you weren’t an adult, you wouldn’t have missed your chance to meet them.

These three super heroes were at the Heymann Center, site of a symphony performance — a performance held only for school children. And with a theme like “Heroes, Past to Present,” these super heroes fit right in.

The heroes were used to entertain the children, plus make them realize that symphonic music can be fun. As they entered the theater area and ran around shaking children’s hands, the Symphony played their theme music. The Lone Ranger was out sick, but the Symphony played his theme song anyway. Adults will also know it as the “William Tell Overture.”

This concert is just one of many the Acadiana Symphony Women’s League has sponsored over the past five years. Actually, two concerts were held on Wednesday, one at 9:30 a.m. for grades 3-5, and another at 11:30 a.m. for older students.

Xiao-Li Li, conductor of the Acadiana Symphony, ran a very informal hour-long show for the children. He interspersed each selection with an introduction and a few encouraging words for the children in the audience. He stressed the importance of the arts in their lives, and urged them to find a talent and stick with it. First-chair violist Lauren Ross demonstrated this type of determination during one of the numbers.

She broke one of her violin strings during some fast-paced passages, but instead of stopping, she reached behind her and got a violin from another performer. Li praised this action, and told the children that they should strive to build this same type of attitude.

Although Li encouraged the children to clap along to the music and respond to his question about the concert, it was also about teaching concert manners. For example, when the lead violinist (Rosen) entered for the first time, the children did not know that this signaled the start of the concert and they should be quiet. She solved the problem by turning toward the audience, and with her finger to her mouth, motioned for them to be quiet. Although she’d never do it for a nighttime concert (although she might want to), it worked beautifully with the children.

Other educational elements included Li defining the word “overture.” He had the children spell it along with him. He also explained that a concert takes three elements: composer, performer and audience. He joked that the conductor always performs better with an audience, plus “you have to have an audience to understand the music.”

He then had his musicians demonstrate the various sounds their instruments make.

“Insiprational” was the consensus for this concert. The Symphony not only played beautiful music, but they also encouraged entrance into any form of art. Throughout the program, their music served as a backdrop for local students who are studying ballet, piano, and cello. Music teacher Matthew J. Farnworth was featured as “Sonata for Two Pianos” by Schubert, and a violinist featured in “Crucifixion.”

Children in attendance at Wednesday’s special performance got a chance to see members of the Lafayette Ballet Theatre above, perform a number from the Nutcracker. On the left, Yeene Kim plays the cello during her rendition of Old Christmas. The Daily Advertiser Thursday, March 10, 1994