

Sesquicentennial gets classical touch

By **DIANE WINDELER**
Classical music critic

The historic San Fernando Cathedral was the appropriate setting Sunday night for the city's first major Sesquicentennial event in the realm of classical music.

REVIEW A 42-piece orchestra comprising members of the San Antonio Symphony under the baton of George Archer Winters mounted an impressive concert that held Beethoven's Symphony No. 1, Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez* and the premier of San Antonio composer-pianist Robert Avalon's specially commissioned Piano Concerto No. 1.

In Winters' hands, the Beethoven was given a graceful, lilting, thoroughly affectionate reading. Phrases were lovingly tapered and shaped, with pristine counterpoint that intensified its Haydnesque and Mozartean influences. As always, Winters held taut, flexible control. (I love the way he flicks cues with his left thumb and forefinger.)

Some scraggly upper string entrances aside, the *Andante* was a delectable study in clear-cut cantabile playing, with the irrepressibly bouyant finale offering unexpected insight into the young aristocratic Beethoven before he became the moody non-conformist of later years.

Guitarist David Underwood took the spotlight for the Rodrigo. Alas, balances throughout the concerto were marred and muddied by booming, unnecessary amplification of the guitar.

SESQUICENTENNIAL EVENT

WHEN: Sunday
WHERE: San Fernando Cathedral

Nevertheless, it was a beautiful account of one of the most exquisite works in the guitar repertory. The first movement was appropriately piquant, while the haunting three-note melody and subsequent development of the *adagio* was sheer beauty.

Brass were especially crisp and even-toned in the *allegro*. Generally, the orchestra was a generous partner, although there were some instances of misalignment during the finale.

Centerpiece of the program was the Avalon concerto, with the composer as soloist. The piece is constructed in four movements, and, although not strictly defined by Avalon as programmatic, he calls it an impression of the Texas Revolutionary struggle.

It is essentially built on a tertiary or tri-tone structure, with a virtuosic piano part that included such finger-tanglers as running chromatic thirds and arpeggios.

Orchestration is varigated, primarily lean, but always with interesting counterrhythms and judicious instrumentation. Avalon played stylishly, with fervor and flash where necessary, and adding introspection in the quiet *andante* movement.

DANCE

Learn the latest Country &