



## MEN ON A MISSION



In a performance that brought together two old friends last February, jazz violinist Christian Howes and conductor Douglas Droste led the Muncie Symphony Orchestra through a performance of Scott Routenberg's "Concerto for Jazz Violin and Orchestra." PHOTO PROVIDED

### MSO conductor, jazz violinist heading to Ukraine

By John Carlson  
jcarlson@muncie.gannett.com

Many folks have seen Ukraine on television news recently, but soon, Muncie Symphony Orchestra conductor Douglas Droste will see it in person, joined by his boyhood friend and colleague, jazz violinist Christian Howes. They're a far cry from the Blues Brothers, granted, but they are men on a mission. The two teamed up with the MSO in February to perform "Concerto for Jazz Violin and Orchestra" by another colleague of Droste's, Ball State University music professor Scott Routenberg. After a video of that performance was posted on YouTube, Droste and Howes were contacted by the cultural ambassador of the U.S. Embassy in Ukraine to perform concerts in Lviv and Kiev this month. Coincidentally, and as Howes noted, almost inadvertently, it turned out Routenberg's piece traces back to the Ukrainian village of Rozdiv, roots shared with the family of the great composer Leonard Bernstein. Moreover, Routenberg's wife, Sofia Kraevich, usually has family living near where a performance of the piece will take place, a



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### FESTIVAL ON THE GREEN 'BEACH PARTY'

Muncie Symphony Orchestra's Festival on the Green is set for today, with the "Beach Party" beginning at 5:30 p.m. and the music at 7 p.m.

By the way, conductor Douglas Droste said the music will include medleys of tunes by the Beach Boys and Jimmy Buffett.

Any other surprises?

"We're gonna try to get a conga line going here," he said.

fact that, when revealed, likely caused jaws to drop.

"It's all about promoting U.S. goodwill," explained the conductor, who is also a BSU professor, during an interview Wednesday at The Cup in The Village.

As you may recall of late, news footage from Ukraine has been dominated by images of edgy people wearing uniforms and carrying automatic weapons. Not to worry, Droste said, noting that he and Howes won't be performing near any shooting.

"We had to have that (assurance) so we could show our wives that we're not going to a war-torn area," Droste said, adding the fact that this trip brings the two musicians back together is a fine thing. "Chris and I are childhood buddies. We grew up playing violin together in youth orchestras in Columbus, Ohio."

The two are also collaborating on a book to be published by Oxford Press, about promoting traditional and eclectic styles of music in high school orchestras. For the record, Droste added with a chuckle, "I'm the 'legit' guy and Chris is the jazz guy," though he noted they have both performed both types of music. The conductor added that the violin readily lends itself to jazz, a fact that probably hasn't hurt Crowes' burgeoning international reputation as an artist.

When the two are performing with a Ukrainian orchestra, the Ukrainian audience will be hearing a special work.

"It's a jazz piece," Droste said of Routenberg's three-movement composition, "but it fits within the confines of a classical concerto."

While he feels looser on the podium with

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figures: 5 of film's great dads

