

Lost for words

By Lisa Talesnick - Vernon Morning Star

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Let me begin with an apology. I don't know what to say.

Violinist Yi-Jia Susanne Hou knocked me out of my intellectual body of consciousness, and into a body of music consciousness. I still haven't landed to find the words. I'm not sure I want to either.

Maybe that's why the audience didn't stand in ovation. They jumped. They jumped from their seats when she finished playing Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64 with the Okanagan Symphony Orchestra Sunday night.

During the intermission and after the concert, everyone at the Vernon Performing Arts Centre was asking me what I was going to write about, what I was going to say.

I don't know.

I kind of feel like a teenager trying to find words to describe a first kiss. How do you know how to do that?

When I was a child my rabbi told me not to use words to describe God's qualities. He said that would limit his magnitude. I don't know.

Hou is 31, but when you look at her you don't know if she's 18 or 24. I've heard it said that people who fill themselves with this much spirit are like that. There is a timelessness about her, about her playing, about Mendelssohn's violin concerto and about her 280-year-old Guaneri del Gesu violin on loan to her as a prize from the Canada Council of the Arts (God bless them!)

Hou says her hands are the size of an eight year olds. That doesn't seem to be a disadvantage in her case. At eight, she performed this concerto for the first time on a quarter-size violin.

She and her violin have grown.

I did have one conscious thought during the concert.

What penetrated my mind was an experience I had as a child of not being able to conceive of the possibility that this life could ever come to an end.

I think that's what Hou and Mendelssohn were confirming while playing this piece Sunday. This was Mendelssohn's last great orchestral work. He died two years later.

It was filled with the delight of being able to communicate through the senses of the physical body of consciousness. It was a sincere expression of the magnificent opportunity of life. But more than that, in this work, he left alive the part of himself that can never perish.

Here's to another imperishable spirit: It was conductor Rosemary Thomson's birthday Sunday. Happy Birthday, Maestra!