

Nov 22, 2008

OSO serenades Penticton with mostly-Mozart program

Friday's concert at the Kelowna Community Theatre was a centennial tribute to the city of Penticton. Featured soloists and choristers were current or former Penticton residents. These artists performed with skill and heart to make the whole Okanagan basin proud of our neighbors to the south.

The opening number of the program not only satisfied the evening's Canadian-content requirement but also showcased the talents of Penticton's composer-in-residence, Ernst Schneider. The piece, *Celebration and Reflection*, painted the last half-century of Penticton's history with a modal melodic palette.

From this point on, it was an all Mozart evening. Soprano Jenavieve Moore and baritone John David Jasper joined the orchestra for the Don-Zerlina duet from *Don Giovanni*. This was followed by Jasper's rendition of the *Don Juan Serenade* from the same opera. The serenade requires a mandolin, so Concertmaster Denis Letourneau rose to the occasion, switched instruments, and demonstrated his versatility.

Moore's interpretation of the *Laudamus Te* from Mozart's C-minor Mass was next. Although she is not a coloratura soprano, Moore negotiated the challenging terrain quite cleanly.

Jasper has an open, hearty sound, perhaps better suited to Masetto than to *Don Giovanni*. Moore's silken soprano is so well focused that, although seeming slight and slender, it was easily heard throughout the auditorium.

For many, the highlight of the evening was the keyboard artistry of Steven Philcox playing Mozart's 17th Piano Concerto (K453). Philcox is known as an accompanist and not as a concert virtuoso; yet his virtuosity is quite remarkable.

After intermission, Maestra Rosemary Thomson led her charges through Mozart's delightful *Symphony 35*, also known as the *Haffner*. Many of phrases in the opening movement end with bold octave leaps, which I felt should have been more accentuated. Other than that, I found it to be joyful Mozart at its boastful best.

Vocalists Moore and Jasper returned to do two more Mozart arias, again with orchestra accompaniment. The Penticton pair ended their set to great acclaim with the catchy *Papageno-Papagena* duet from the *Magic Flute*.

It was a long program, lasting the better part of two and one-half hours. The South Okanagan's *Musaic Chorus* now mounted the risers to give voice to the hauntingly beautiful *Ave Verum Corpus*.

To end with a fitting flourish, chorus and orchestra were joined by soloists: Jenavieve Moore, soprano; Leslie Turner, alto; Tom Klassen, tenor and director of *Musaic*; and John David Jasper, baritone. The massed forces did a stirring reading of Mozart's K.276, *Regina Coeli*.

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