

PENTICTON WESTERN NEWS

Symphony starts new season

By Roswitha Masson - Penticton Western News

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Arianna Lasinsky, along with other students from the Penticton Academy of Music, formed part of the musical entertainment at a reception in the Penticton Museum celebrating the opening of the Okanagan Symphony Orchestra's 50th season.
Steve Kidd/Western News

The Okanagan Symphony Orchestra is entering its 50th anniversary season and there was a festive atmosphere in Cleland Theatre as people gathered to enjoy the opening concert on Saturday evening.

However, it wasn't without some problems. Significant cuts in government funding resulted in program changes. Instead of John Estacio's *Solaris* and Gustav Holst's *The Planets*, the orchestra presented the overture to Wagner's opera *Die Meistersinger von Nuremberg* and Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 5* along with the premiere of Penticton composer Ernst Schneider's *Romantic Concerto*.

Conductor Rosemary Thomson chose the *Meistersinger* overture to start off the anniversary season on a celebrative note. There were three dominant themes: a triumphant fanfare, a yearning love theme and a jolly woodwind scherzo. A single stroke on the triangle announced the climax with all three themes appearing simultaneously in perfect harmony, proof of Wagner's exceptional craftsmanship.

Pianist Arnold Draper performed Ernst Schneider's *Romantic Concerto*, which Schneider had given him about 30 years ago in hopes that it would someday be performed.

It was exciting to witness the world premiere of this masterwork. It had the emotional expression and virtuosity of a romantic piano concerto, the clarity and elegance of a classical composition, the vivid colour of an impressionist work and the boldness of contemporary music.

Arnold Draper played with lovely lyrical melodic lines and executed energetic surging chord passages with ease and bravura. At the end of the piece the audience jumped to its feet with enthusiastic applause.

After the intermission the orchestra honoured their own violinist Don Cowell, who passed away last year. The memorial piece was *Nimrod* from Elgar's *Enigma Variations*.

Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No.5* filled the remainder of the evening. A multitude of contrasting themes with a wide range of moods captured the listener throughout the four movements. Melodies rose from the depth of double basses and cellos to soaring heights of flutes and violins. Tchaikovsky's own words describe his art best: "I have tried more than once to express in music the torment and delight of love...Words are not enough, and where they are powerless, a more eloquent language comes fully armed: Music."

The last movement of the *Symphony* had relentless fast passages. It seemed to come to an ending and there was some applause, but surprisingly it started again to lead to a grand finale.

What a great performance the orchestra has delivered again. I wish it success and good fortune for the next 50 years.