

May 10, 2009

Quartetto Gelato and the OSO team up for a great season finale.

Quartetto Gelato wowed a near capacity crowd last Sunday afternoon at the final concert with the Okanagan Symphony. The program was well crafted with plenty of variety and maintained a good pace throughout.

Under the baton of Rosemary Thomson, I have witnessed the growth and maturing of the orchestra during this season. She doesn't merely conduct, she draws the best out of each player giving ultimate enjoyment to the listener. Throughout the afternoon every section showed their ability to bring the music to life, and to provide strong support to Quartetto Gelato. From the stirring beginning of the Overture to La Gazza Ladra to the very last note, the orchestra displayed an excellent dynamic range, clear articulation, well balanced instrumentation, sweeping melodies, huge crescendos, lush sounds in the soft passage, as well as a playful lilt when required.

Quartetto Gelato came to Kelowna touted as "a dazzling ensemble who enchant audiences with their exotic blend of virtuosity, passion and charisma". They lived up to every superlative. Their unique instrumentation – violin (sometimes mandolin), accordion, cello and clarinet offers a blend of sounds rarely heard. Consummate artists in their own right, they offer ensemble playing which is beyond compare, spiced with humorous bits. A tightly knit group, they constantly enchanted me with their lush sounds, their bravura style, the wide variety in their programming, and the wonderful rapport they had with the orchestra.

They offered several selections on their own, which gave an even greater opportunity to show their abilities. The first such selection was "Volare" and while it was well crafted, I would have liked the pace to be just a trifle faster. Perhaps I think back to Dean Martin who recorded it many years ago, but this version seemed a trifle sedate. This was our first opportunity to hear the great voice of Peter Desotto who sang several times, displaying a range of sound from lush and sensuous to dramatic. His singing ability is on par with his superb violin and mandolin playing, where he displayed an amazing talent.

The cellist, Carina Reeves gave us impeccable artistry and wonderful sounds. She filled in the ensemble sound most capably, as well as giving us great solo playing.

Alexander Sevastian, accordionist, gave us some of the most exciting moments with his nimble fingers, which moved up and down the keyboard at breakneck speed, all the while maintaining strong cross rhythms with his left hand.

Clarinetist Kornel Wolak, also an amazing virtuoso, demonstrated his dexterity and tonal control from the lowest to the highest notes on the instrument.

At the end of the concert and after the encore, the audience rose to its feet with richly deserved standing ovations.

Marvin Dickau is an Organist, Pianist and Conductor who has an A.Mus. from the University of Alberta. He has given solo piano and organ recitals and accompanied many singers and instrumentalists in Kelowna and Calgary.