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Green Bay Symphony creates rousing opener

BY WARREN GERDS • WGERDS@GREENBAYPRESSGAZETTE.COM • OCTOBER 19, 2008

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Splash and dash were part of the Green Bay Symphony Orchestra's 95th season-opening concert Saturday at the Weidner Center.

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A larger-than-usual audience was on hand -- sprinkled liberally with students -- perhaps to catch one of the most remarkable products of the Green Bay classical music scene, violinist Wayne Lin. Or perhaps it was to catch the formidable "Symphony No. 5" by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky.

Everyone was ready for large tasks in the 2-hour, 20-minute concert, starting with dynamic music director Bridget-Michaele Reischl.

The evening produced two standing ovations, proof of satisfaction with her work and that of the performers.

In a different twist before any music was played, Kimbra Allison, a violinist from the orchestra, greeted the audience with a little speech. It was a nice touch, a hello and thanks.

As is tradition at the start of a season, Reischl then led the orchestra in "The Star-Spangled Banner." Not everyone in the balcony stood. That was odd. "Disrespectful" is another word that could be used.

Next, a video was shown with Reischl interviewing Philip Rothman, this season's composer-in-residence. He is composing a work that the orchestra will give a world premiere later in the season. Saturday, the topic was Rothman's "Morningside Run," which premiered at Carnegie Hall, which the orchestra would play.

The interview provided insights into Rothman's concepts in the piece, written on a New York theme. The "Run" refers to Rothman's jogs through Manhattan.

"Morningside Run" accentuates the positives of the city. It is filled with brightness, hustle and bustle, energy, bigness, vigor and power, with sections of peacefulness. Rothman definitely likes the place in his piece, and that warmth is infectious.

Rothman was on hand, and he hopped on stage at the conclusion of his work to receive a hug from Reischl and warm applause from the audience.

Next came a Green Bay Symphony moment. It was the arrival Lin, 26, a Green Bay native and a product of the orchestra's youth program, as part of a young trio featured in Ludwig van Beethoven's three-movement "Concerto for Violin, Cello, Piano and Orchestra," nicknamed "Triple Concerto."

The trio of friends dressed to impress: pianist Yalin Chi in a red gown, cellist Yves Dharamraj in all white (boots, too) and Lin in all black, save for lime sleeves.

The piece was colorful as well, an intricate tapestry with the focus often on the trio playing in dazzling configurations. The weavings were sometimes bold, sometimes delicate, and the interplay among trio and with Reischl and the orchestra was splendid to hear and see.

CONCERT REVIEW

Green Bay Symphony Orchestra
4 stars out of 4

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Clarity marked Chi's playing. Dharamraj captured the soul of his instrument and produced beautiful sounds. Lin produced strong strokes with flair and genteel ones with a feathery touch.

Fine work by this fine trio in the midst of solid support – and sharing – by the orchestra drew a standing ovation.

Tchaikovsky's four-movement "Fifth" took up the second half of the program. Reischl and a 60-player configuration of the orchestra were in their element in the popular and demanding piece.

The first movement is loaded, running from funereal to elements of march, excitement, waltz and explosiveness. The second features the solemnity of an opening horn solo (Reischl gave player Bruce Atwell top recognition during bows). The third features sweet waltz sounds. The fourth is ceremonial, with Tchaikovsky returning to his theme with greater and greater energy.

The piece ended with an eruption of excitement, followed by the standing ovation and two call-backs for Reischl.

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