

Dreamy night seduces symphony audience

BY JOE COUTURE, LEADER-POST APRIL 6, 2009

Regina Symphony Orchestra

Bohemian Dreams

Conexus Arts Centre

Saturday

Though the Regina Symphony Orchestra concert on Saturday night went through a name change before being called "Bohemian Dreams," that title was apt as the orchestra and guest artist did indeed take the audience on a tour through colourful, mystical and romantic dream worlds.

The evening was originally scheduled to be called "Raum at the Top", with the orchestra playing "Carmen, The Passion: Overture," composed by the RSO's principal oboist Elizabeth Raum. Her daughter, violinist Erika Raum, was booked to perform Bela Bartok's "Violin Concerto No. 2."

In November, the RSO announced that Erika would be unable to perform as she was expecting her second child to be born around the same time as the show. The title of the show was changed to "Bohemian Dreams" and Lara St. John was engaged to perform the Bartok work instead.


Audiences at Saturday's show collectively gasped and applauded upon learning that Erika Raum had recently given birth to triplets.


The work by her mother Elizabeth Raum was a rich, full and highly visual, Spanish-flavoured "Overture," which, while drawing themes from a score Raum created for the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, is not original to the ballet score, as Raum explained there wasn't time in the ballet for a full overture. Featuring strong, story-telling melodies and beautiful work by soloists, the "Overture" was a very enjoyable beginning to the evening.

Guest artist Lara St. John, a Canadian-born, critically acclaimed violinist and successful recording artist, took the stage next as the featured soloist for Bartok's "Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No. 2."

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St. John gave an intense and passionate performance of the work, eliciting fantastic sound from 1779 "Salabue" Gaudagnini violin on which she currently performs. St. John and the orchestra delivered the complicated Bartok concerto with all its depth, nuance and texture.

Like much of Bartok's work, the concerto is full of dissonant and even odd aspects not always appealing, at least at first, to some -- Director/Conductor Victor Sawa described a first listen as often like watching "a foreign film without the subtitles" -- but even symphony-goers who had never heard the work surely could not help but become lost in the beautiful, if certainly at times strange, "Dream" world created by St. John and the RSO in their performance of the concerto.

Following the intermission, the orchestra performed Antonin Dvorak's "Symphony No. 6 in D major, op. 60."

In his opening remarks, Sawa made reference to Czech pilsner beer in relation to the Czech folk music themes present in the piece, getting much laughter out of the audience with jokes about buying giant bottles in cases of 24 for mere dollars in Europe.

Each of the four well-performed movements of the symphony were unique in sound and intensity, but all were rich in colour featuring the full power of the orchestra and its many parts. The stunningly beautiful "Adagio" second movement was a personal favourite, but the dramatic opening and closing movements and the incredibly intense third "Scherzo" movement were all excellent

All in all, the seventh concert in the RSO's current Mosaic Masterworks Series truly made for a pleasant evening spent lost in "Bohemian Dreams."

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