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MUSIC

Winnipeg Free Press - PRINT EDITION

Opening night's musical rewards well worth defying the cold to hear

By: Jeff Monk
Posted: 01/31/2011 1:00 AM | Comments: 2

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IT would take more than glacial January temperatures to keep resilient Winnipeg New Music Festival fans from attending a 20th-year opening-night gala that promised to be an opulent affair.

The first-ever sold-out New Music Festival event offered both a look back and a view forward by presenting American composer John Corigliano's 1991 Grammy Award-winning *Symphony No. 1*, and two premiere works: composer-in-residence Vincent Ho's *Shaman* and Randolph Peters' *Io*.

The evening started with an entertaining lecture by vivacious WSO conductor Alexander Mickelthwate, Ho, Peters and Corigliano explaining the works they were to present. Ho's *Shaman* was written expressly for percussionist extraordinaire Dame Evelyn Glennie and his earnest excitement at being asked to compose for this petite powerhouse was obvious. Corigliano took care in delivering his views on the genesis of his 1980s-vintage *AIDS Symphony*, and the added gravitas of losing nearly 100 friends during the early years of the epidemic in the U.S. was palpable.

The concert began with Peters' *Io*, which is based on mythological themes and was as engaging as it was suggestive of imposing mountain vistas and rolling expanses. There was naturalness to the piece that was soothing and almost soundtrack-like in its movements. Like an ode to some lost moment in time, the piece was beguiling, with distinct beginning, middle and end movements that played out like a theme to an imaginary western.

Following this was the enigmatic new work *Shaman*, featuring Glennie at stage front moving between three separate percussion setups. The piece was built in four movements and its ritualistic edge was aided by Glennie's force-of-nature skills, along with the WSO's faultless and exquisite underlay. Ho's work is entrancing and hypnotic even when the music builds to one of its many crashing crescendos. The somewhat sombre *Interlude: Conjuring The Spirits* drew a hush from the audience while Glennie caressed her vibraphone with masterful grace.

Near the end of the piece, a quintet of Pope's Hill Folk Festival drum circle refugees brought the only out-of-place distraction from the otherwise virtuoso piece.

Corigliano's *Symphony No. 1* is a passionate work with many layers of meaning built into it. As the composer explained before the performance, he sees much of the work as an "epitaph without words" and dedicates specific portions of the composition to personal friends felled by AIDS.

He sees the ebbs and flows as a way to characterize "floating in a sea of memory" and achieves this by a rather unique placement of the instruments on stage, including a piano being played completely out of sight.

The personal linkage between composer and the piece he has written was delivered with absolutely brilliant intricacy by the WSO, with Mickelthwate conducting the players to a fever pitch. There was intensity and emotional heft to the rise and fall that existed between the "rage and remembrance" soul of the music.

The blasting upheavals of sentiment felt in a dying person's last days were channelled perfectly and it

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speaks to the orchestra's unyielding skill as they moved confidently from delicately poignant to loud and boisterous.

ConcertReview

Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra

New Music Festival

-- Centennial Concert Hall

-- Saturday, Jan. 29

-- Attendance: 2,023

4 1/2 out of five stars

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JANUARY 31, 2011 AT 2:43 PM

and I disagree. It was called 'Fire Dance' and the drums added another level to it.

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POSTED BY: [baseballfan](#)
JANUARY 31, 2011 AT 10:52 AM

What do they mean by 'a quintet of Pope's Hill Folk Festival drum circle refugee'?

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Calendar Girls

At first glance, it looks like a classic Women's Institute calendar, complete with

jams, cakes and knitting, except for one thing - the ladies are posing nude. When Annie Clarke's husband dies from leukemia, ...

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