

A concert of cosmic proportions

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Photo credit James Hall

SAN RAFAEL--It's probably too late. After Sunday night's performance, word will have gotten out about the Marin Symphony concert and Tuesday's show will be sold out. But try to get tickets anyway, because missing this show will be one of the things any music lover will look back on with deep regret.

Those who have lived in Marin for more than 20 years carry a sense of pride in having "discovered" its beauty before the hoards of newcomers invaded. Well, guest pianist Orion Weiss and composer Peteris Vasks are like Marin used to be – "undiscovered" treasures. But this situation won't last for long. That's not prophecy, but logical deduction.

Weiss, 24 years old and at one time the only student of famed pianist Emanuel Ax, plays with a depth of understanding unfathomable by most musicians and as rare as true prodigy in children. His dynamic range leaves the listener breathless, on the edge of cataclysmic anticipation that resolves in sensate release of intergalactic magnitude. Superlatives are superfluous. The young man is a musical genius with complete mastery of his talent and complete unity with his instrument. He and the piano, so organically connected as to be inseparable, awed Sunday night's MSO audience to a five-minute standing ovation.

Weiss ended the program as Vasks began it. Vasks' composition, *Sala*, composed expressly for this program, also elicited a standing ovation from the audience after its world premiere Sunday night. The piece – so beautiful and haunting it moved some to tears – evoked a vision of a mystical island of serenity, peace and freedom. But one attained after long struggle. As a composition, it demands to be studied. As an incredible piece of contemporary music, it demands to be performed and recorded. That it will be is also not prophecy but deduction.

Best kudos go to Marin Symphony Music Director Alasdair Neale, the maestro who orchestrated and conducted this cosmic program, which also included a piece from the ultimate musical genius, Amadeus Mozart.

The true measure of genius is the ability to perform so effortlessly that anyone thinks they can do the same. Either that, or no one notices because the technique so well serves the music. In that, Neale is the creator par excellence. His vision of possibility for this program, his genius in recognizing the talent (not just of the soloist and composer but also of his orchestra) that created it and his exquisite musicianship in carrying it off also deserve standing ovation.