

MSO FIRST CONCERT OF 2007 MARKED WITH BRILLIANCE AND OVATIONS

Reviewers Name: Donna S. Kline

Company Reviewed: Marin Symphony Orchestra

Soloist/s: Orion Weiss, piano

Performance: Third concert of MSO Season

Location: Civic Center Auditorium--San Rafael, CA

Performance Date: 2007-01-28 and 30

The first MSO concert of the new year and the third of their season was performed at the Civic Center Auditorium and to a full house of very enthusiastic concert goers this past Sunday and Tuesday evenings.

The program opened with the Magnum Opus World Premiere of Sala, a Symphonic Elegy for Orchestra, that was composed this past year. Composed by the Latvian composer, Peteris Vasks, Sala was a short tonal work (22 minutes) and melancholy in mood. Vasks describes his work as "lyrical, personal, and dramatic," where the melody begins in the English horn and gradually builds with the full orchestra, coming to a dramatic climax.

The title of the work--Sala-- means island, and Vasks' interpretation is that every person is an island, which is a source of sadness as well as energy power and drama. Beautifully performed and led by conductor, Neale, it is a work that deserves many more opportunities to be heard. This work was the culmination of the Magnum Opus, a joint project of the Marin, Santa Rosa and Oakland East Bay Symphonies, which is designed to connect living composers to contemporary orchestras. It is a 5 year project, administered by Meet the Composer and funded by Kathryn Gould, who was graciously acknowledged in the audience by conductor, Neale.

Composer Peteris Vasks, who came from Latvia for this world premier performance, was also introduced after the orchestra's outstanding performance.

The Mozart Symphony No. 35 in D Major, K.385, the "Haffner," was performed after the Vasks' work, an interesting contrast to the modern, Sala. Composed in 4 mvts, the "Haffner" is the epitome of the 18th Century Classical style, Allegro con spirito, Andante, Menuetto and Presto. Performed in the large cavernous-like auditorium at the Civic Center, conductor Neale and the orchestra were able to balance the extremely unusual melodic contours of the first theme, as well as bring out the elegant, Viennese geniality of the 3rd. Menuetto movement with great sensitivity. Mozart directed the Presto movement to be played "as fast as possible," and with energy which the orchestra was able to comply. It was a resounding climax to the first half of the evening's program.

The piece de resistance of the MSO concert was the sterling performance of Sergei Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor, Op. 30, performed by 24 year-old pianist from Ohio, **Orion Weiss**. Rachmaninoff composed this concerto for a 20 concert series on his first U.S. tour in 1909. Written in 3 movements, Allegro ma non tanto, Intermezzo: Adagio, and Finale: Alla breve, this is a tour de force work and considered the "right of passage" for pianists.

Mr. Weiss succeeded splendidly and got an immediate standing ovation after he completed the 45 minute-long concerto. At some points in the first movement, the orchestra accompaniment tended to drown-out the Mr. Weiss' playing, especially in the opening movement's first theme, which is remarkable in its simplicity, beauty, and elegance. Mr. Weiss also showed a little nervousness at the beginning by swinging his left leg as he performed the technically difficult passages in the first movement.

It tended to distract at first, however, as the beauty of this concerto continued, Mr. Weiss became more assured in his playing and the nervous-like leg gestures stopped. Before the 7:30pm concert Mr. Weiss talked with conductor, Neale in the pre-concert talks, explaining that he feels the Rachmaninoff 3rd Piano Concerto is an expansion of the Second. Having performed both many times, at this point in his career, his point was well taken.

The standing ovation and "Bravo's" after Mr. Weiss' performance was well deserved. He graciously performed the beautiful Brahms Waltz in A Major, from Op. 39 as an encore. It was an electric performance and one Marinites won't forget.
